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Delphi,

CONSIDERED

LOCALLY, MORALLY, AND POLITICALLY.

THE ARNOLD PRIZE ESSAY FOR 1859.

BY CHARLES S. BOWEN, B.A.,

FELLOW OF BALLIOL COLLEGE.



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Delphi.

THE Oracle of Delphi has been the less appreciated because it is difficult to accustom the eye to the gloomy half-light which rests upon past superstitions, and because from the days of the Fathers of our Church it has been the fashion to contrast it with the pure revelation since given to man. But the noblest memories of Paganism suffer sad eclipse if studied by the side of Christianity. He who wishes to form a just estimate of them will withdraw from the brilliant nineteenth century, into the dark and dusty chambers of antiquity, and read the story of heathen institutions by the light of heathen times. This, indeed, is no easy task. The greatest systems die away and leave but a few scattered traces, a word here, a line there. When we have gathered up the fragments and pieced them together, it still requires patience and imagination to believe that the systems were so great. Thus it is with Delphi. We are in danger of falling short of the true conception of how great it was, how catholic, how central. Yet the rock and temple near the vanished town of Crissa were to the Hellenic world what Rome was to the middle ages,—the heart of its religion, the source of its culture, the nucleus of its politics. There the influence was enshrined which educated Greek thought, moulded Greek manners, and animated Greek art. The introduction of the faith of the Pythian Apollo was an epoch, a revolution. With that faith Greece grew, and, it may be, the same causes that led to its decline paved the way also for the fall of Greece.

It was in all probability through one of the few defiles which thread the mountain-barrier on the north of Thessaly, that a conquering race marched southwards, entrusted with the high destiny of civilizing Greece. In later days tradition pointed to the vale of Tempe as the spot; a narrow gorge between Olympus and Ossa, where the white* waters of the Peneus, through masses of black rock and scenery of the wildest beauty, emerge upon the marshy shores of the ocean. Nor is such a belief without foundation. Long afterwards, when Delphi had become the city towards which Grecian faith turned, every eighth summer a procession of pilgrims wound their way through the passes of Cæta and across the

* ἀργυροδίνης.

plains of Thessaly, to pay their vows at the little altar of Apollo Tempeites in the middle of the ravine, to visit the place whence Dorus led his people, and to bring back the peaceful offering of the broken laurel-bough and of the golden ear.

Of the vicissitudes of their southern progress historians have recorded little and have known less. Bare indications of some Doric settlement or of some Doric migration (for they were a wandering people) are all that remain to us. But it cannot have been without many a fierce contest that they won their way across that rich champaign to the lofty hills which part it from central Greece. Since time immemorial the plains had been inhabited by a primitive and agricultural nation, accustomed to a savage religion and a barbarous though peaceful life. From the black stream of Titaresius to Pheræ, and the heights around Iolcus, all was theirs. Year by year they collected about the oaks of Larissa, if antiquarians speak true, to sacrifice to their Pelasgic god with dark and dreadful rites. Beyond, to the south-west, were nations of like habits, soil of equal or scarcely less fertility. As far as the eye could reach it swept over leagues of level land, well fitted by its extraordinary fruitfulness to be the battle-field of races^b. But of the conflict between the invaders and the invaded nothing is certain. So much only we may conjecture, that like their descendants in the Peloponnese, the Dorians probably followed the windings of the many rivers which irrigate Thessaly. Yet though authentic evidence is wanting, and the traces of their march have died away, the clang of arms comes down to us preserved in many a random mythe: Hercules and the Centaurs, Bacchus and the Lapithæ, the deities of Olympus and the Titans, Apollo and the Phlegyans, all are tales that perhaps embody some fierce struggle between the old and new life, between the powers of barbarism and the powers of civilization, and that commemorate the throes of agony in the midst of which Hellas was born.

It is a remark true of most civilized nations, and in ancient times peculiarly applicable to the Dorians, that wherever they go they carry their own customs and their own religion. From Corcyra to Halicarnassus the Dorian remained a Dorian still, with the same institutions and an unchanging creed. They took with them wives from their own country, and in their new abode dwelt for ever a distinct family. They took with them their old faith, and the historian tracks them through the world by the humanizing

^b Mardonius says of the Greeks: ἐξευρόντες τὸ κάλλιστον χωρίον καὶ λειότατον ἐς τοῦτο κατιόντες μάχονται. Hdt. vii. 9.

worship of their bright god Apollo. These characteristics prevent them indeed from making good colonists. They will not, like the plastic Ionian, amalgamate with the previous inhabitants, and become a hybrid race. For centuries they stand aloof, an aristocracy of conquerors, like the Normans among the Saxons; and the native Carian in the east, the native Sicel in the west, alike hated with a deadly hatred their severe and unbending masters. A Dorian conquest could not then be accomplished without dire strife. It was, doubtless, around Delphi that the fight was the hottest and most protracted. Here the storm of battle gathered and broke. The testimony of all antiquity clearly shews that the Crissæan plain and the heights of Parnassus had been in former times the centre of the old religion, as in after times it was to be the centre of the new. What was the nature of this ancient cultus we shall presently examine with the view of bringing into stronger relief the moral influence of that which took its place. For the moment it is sufficient to notice that the Greek "Sagen," or national mythes, consistently aver that at first the spot was sacred to Earth^c, the primeval mother. The very cave from which the god uttered his prophetic responses was of old employed for the ceremonies of Gaia. In subsequent ages her temple was still left standing to the south of the Adytum. Here, too, was the fountain-head of whatever rude justice regulated the social intercourse of the people round. Here Themis^d, seated within the hollow of the rock, gave laws to man. The priests of this old faith would naturally be the faithful champions of national independence,—would be to Apollo's children what the Druid was to the Roman, what the hierarchy of Peru was to the Spaniard. Delphi must have been the point where the two races met and clashed; and we may well conceive that years of concentrated warfare have intervened before we find the Dorian god enshrined upon his seat.

The legends which cluster round the Doric occupation of the spot, if rightly read, are significant of this. It is not without a mighty effort that Apollo, the Protector and Destroyer, slays the serpent Python. Nor did the issue leave the victor much room for triumph: the life of the slaughtered dragon is required at the hand of his immortal foe. For long years he wandered, so the tale runs, to the uttermost parts of Hellas to wash the blood away, or fed the flocks of Admetus by the still waters of Pheræ. Variations

^c Æschyl. Eum. 2:—τὴν πρωτόμαντιν Γαίαν, ἐκ δὲ τῆς Θέμιν, κ.τ.λ. Cf. Gronovius, vol. vii. p. 15.

^d Ἡ πρώτη κατέδεξε βροτοῖς μαντήτιον ἄγνων
Δελφικῶ ἐν κευθμῶνι θεμιστεύουσα θεοῖσι
Πυθίῳ ἐν πατέδῳ.—Orpheus. Hym. Them. 3—5.

of the story are indeed numerous: Apollo suffering for the death of the Cyclopes and condemned for a long winter to Tartarus is but one. All alike typify the intensity of the battle and the doubtfulness of the first success. Was it not even so that Cadmus, the Regenerator^e, overcame that old dragon that dwelt in the fields of Thebes, and raised a new generation of men upon the ruins of the old? He, too, in like manner testified by a long atonement to the awfulness of the strife, and among the proverbs of the Greek language none is more significant than that which records the price at which his victory was bought^f.

From such legends as the above is gathered all the information we possess about the founding of the oracle. The student of Greek antiquities can only travel back to a certain distance; beyond is cloudland and fableland; mist and thick darkness hang over the beginnings of things. The debateable ground which lies on the other side of the realm of history is full of dragons, and of heroes, and of giants,—grim forms that mean much, if we only knew what they meant. Between this and the domain of fact lies a long and hidden region. When the historical curtain is drawn, we see the true magnitude of the interval. When it rises upon Delphi, it reveals no little temple struggling for existence; we have before us the Mecca, the Jerusalem of a great kingdom, the Holy City where the tribes go up and worship. The vestiges of the deadly enmities which blazed there once are gone; the old ceremonial that fought for life so stoutly is gone too; the memory thereof is buried, and its place knows it no more.

Let us endeavour to paint for ourselves the picture which displayed itself to the devout pilgrim who, in the bright days of Delphi, resorted thither for spiritual consolation, or for temporal advice; and standing with him in imagination there, with all the spirit of the place upon us, we shall be better able to review the question, what influence it had upon the morals and the politics of Greece.

Some few miles north-east of the ancient site of Cirrha, the mountainous range of Parnassus shoots out two little spurs towards the sea, thus locking on three sides an inclined valley, as the tiers of an ancient circus embrace the arena below. Upon the fourth side a small river runs, by name the Pleistus, which has forced its way between the eastern spur and Mount Cirphius, directly south and opposite; crosses laterally at the foot of the glen; then, sweeping round in a shining curve, before many leagues unites its waters to the bay. The descending slope that forms the

* If his name does not rather mean "Eastern."

^f Καδμεία πύλη.

amphitheatre is broken by ridges into three terraces, such as the traveller is wont to see in hilly countries. On the highest rose the sanctuary; below was the town and the cultivated hollow which poets² called the Vale of Delphi; above all towered the ridges of Parnassus itself³, sheer walls of rock, rising inland towards the summit of the chain, desolate, grand, and picturesque. Those who stood above the level of the temple, and turned their gaze toward the south-west, might perhaps have looked far over to the smiling gulf of Corinth, an unbroken¹ prospect of well-watered fields. Upon their left was the famous plane-tree, and the spring of Castalia, whose stream, leaping down between^k two rocks, out of a huge cleft that divided them, lost itself in a dell below, till it fell finally into the Pleistus; and mounting the rough ascent, just beyond the little torrent, might be seen the sacred way, which, issuing from the same gorge as the Pleistus, rounded the flank of the promontory of rock and climbed up its warm side^l. Few are the shadows that pass over the valley; through the long day the southern sun beats down on it; and the brilliancy of the sky is immortalized in the name which the inhabitants conferred upon the hills about, of Phædriades, or shining cliffs.

But the property of the temple was not bounded by the extent of the view. Above, on the heights, as far as Ligeia and Tithorea, both Doric^m villages,—towards the west, beyond the stadium, and the hill on which it nestledⁿ, to Amphissa and the pasturages along its stream,—all was part of the Ager Apollinis, sacred to the god and to his priests for ever. The Dorians who founded Delphi, there, as in their other settlements, remained a privileged military class among a subject population. There is nothing in ancient history which so long retains a trace of caste as religious institutions. Priesthoods are generally hereditary, and where this is the case the hierarchy has probably been founded by conquest. The Brahmins in Bengal, and to a modified degree throughout the rest of India, the Magi and Chaldæans in Asia, the priests of Egypt, all indicate previous military occupation. The lucrativeness of the sacerdotal position renders it an object of ambition^o to individuals, and the power it may exercise over the newly-conquered people gives it importance in the eyes of their conquerors. Accordingly, we

¹ κοιλώπεδον νότος. Pind. Pyth. v. 20.

² ἄβατοι κορυφαί. Ion, 86.

³ πεδίων... εὐσύνοπτον. Æsch. Ctes.

^k διόφου πέτρας... Κασταλλας τε νῆμα. Soph. Antig. 1126.

^l Ion, 86, 122.

^m Müller's Dorians.

ⁿ Κρισταίσιον ἐν πτυχῇς. Pind. Pyth. vi. 18.

^o As it was to Mæandrius, Hdt. iii. 142; Demonax, Hdt. iii. 161; the Telonitæ, Hdt. vii. 153. Cf. Tacit. Hist., bk. ii.:—"Tantum Cinyrades sacerdos consultur."

shall expect to find Delphi, the head quarters of the Doric faith, entirely under the domination of a priestly aristocracy. It holds the position in some respects with regard to Greece lately filled in continental Europe by the States of the Church. If anything, the parallel is inadequate. Much of the strength of Roman Catholicism rests in its freedom from hereditary influence. The cope and the mitre level all ranks; the cardinal's hat, nay, St. Peter's chair itself, is within the reach of burgher and prince alike. But the purest Doric blood ran in the veins of the holy college of Delphi[†]; they were ten in number, one half life-princes of the family of Deucalion, the other chosen by lot[‡] from the remaining houses of their race. Absolute in authority, with jurisdiction[§] over life and death, free^{||}, so to speak, of the sacred chamber of the tripod, they doubtless had opportunities of tampering with the oracles, of which, if rumour spoke truth, they liberally availed themselves. Surrounded by a throng of dependants, here they dwelt in luxury and magnificence, looking down upon the fields that owed them fealty.

The exact relation of old subsisting between sacred and national property is a question which puzzles not only the student, but the practised antiquarian. The distinction is possibly the growth of time. At first the two may have been synonymous terms, and the land which a conquering tribe acquired would be called indiscriminately by the name of their god or their nation. As the god is father of the clan, his children enjoy a prescriptive right of using, though not appropriating, his territory; legally speaking, they have *usus*, not *proprietas*. But feudal estate by lapse of time has a tendency to become property: private rights spring up: interests, independent of religion, increase, and as years roll on the terms are changed. State property no more belongs to the temple, but the temple to the State. The two ideas are, however, still cognate, and by a legal tradition fines and confiscations levied for offences committed against the whole body politic are paid into the-treasury[†] of the god. Nor is

[†] The accounts of their number and of the families from which they were chosen differ widely. There is reason to suppose that Delphi was once governed by kings or *πυρτάνεις*. Müller, Dor. iii. 6. 10, and 8. 3.

[‡] Ion asks Xuthus, τίς προφητεύει θεῶν; The answer is, Δελφῶν ἀριστῆς οὗς ἐκλήρωσεν πάρος.—Eur. Ion, 416. Also called ἀρχαὶ ἀπιχάριοι χθονός, 1110; Δελφῶν ἑνακτες, 1220.

[§] Eurip. Ion.

^{||} οἱ πλησίον θάσσουσι τρίτοδος. Eur. Ion, 415.

[†] So those who had played the traitor to Greece in the Persian war are sentenced to forfeit one-tenth of their property to the temple. Hdt. vii. 132. A tithe of the property of persons condemned for treason at Athens went to Minerva of the Parthenon. Now a tithe, or tenth, is the usual tax which in ancient times goes to the suzerain. For example, in despotisms it is the common tribute; so also in conquered lands. Boeck. Ath. iii. ch. 19. 11. This tithe was originally paid in kind. Th. vi. 21.

this only true of fines. The Epidaurian^a farmers of State lands in the time of Thucydides do homage to the deity who is, so to speak, their suzerain, and head-rent is due to the coffers of his temple. The allies, who obtain sacred olive-wood from Athens, are compelled to send yearly offerings to Athene Polias^z, and the first act of the conquerors of Lesbos^γ is to dedicate one-tenth of the island to their patron god.

But the fields in the immediate vicinity of Delphi were the property of the god by no mere fiction of law. They had never passed out of the hands of his ministering priests. No complication of interests had arisen to make the tenure upon which they were held traditional. The state and the sanctuary could not be separated even in thought, for they were one and the same. Such was also the case in Elis^z. When Lepreum rents Elean territory, a talent every twelve months is owing to Zeus Olympius. It was customary with poorer temples to farm out the arable acres they could not or did not wish to cultivate themselves. But the revenues of Apollo Pythius were sure and abundant, and it is very doubtful whether it was lawful to let to strangers any part of his estate; while it was profanity for a neighbouring nation to employ it for pasturage or the plough.

As the land was the inalienable right of Apollo, so the *usus* thereof was limited to his priests. The temple lay on the rocky incline above, like a huge monastery, in the midst of its own grounds. The paupers far and near lived upon its pious bounty, as the sturdy beggars of the fourteenth century on the alms of some wealthy abbey. But the abbays had at least this merit,—if, owing to the lowness of their rents, and their indiscriminating relief of vagabond mendicity, they did not encourage, they did not actually discourage, labour; they tended to change a military population into an industrial. If we wish to make the illustration exact, we must take one of those large houses of which Sir Thomas More so bitterly complains, which called in their leases, “left no ground for tillage,” cleared their estate to make room for sheep, and imagined that to feed the peasant was a sufficient compensation for rendering him idle. For no ploughshare or pruning-hook was to be seen within the limits of the god’s dominions^a. The priest, like the Levite of old, had no private inheritance; it was not by the sweat of his brow, or the labour of his hands, that he was to earn his bread. He was sumptuously clothed, yet he neither

^a Th. v. 53.

^z Hdt. v. 82.

^γ Th. iii. 50.

^z Götze, Das Delphische Orakel, p. 62. Th. v. 31. Ἡλαῖοι τὴν γῆν νεμομένοις αὐτοῖς τοῖς Δελφείοις τάλαντον ἔταξαν τῷ Διὶ τῷ Ὀλυμπίῳ ἀποφέρειν. Ἀποφορῇ is the word used of the tax paid by a feudal soldiery to their suzerain. Hdt. ii. 109.

^a Cf. ἀναθεῖναι τῷ θεῷ ἐπὶ πόσῃ ἀεργίᾳ.

delved nor span. The choicest viands loaded his board, though the prospect over the Crissean plain was broken by no waving corn or ordered vineyard. "We live on steep and barren heights," says a jolly Delphian to the cynical Lucian^b; "the sanctuary, the god, the oracle are our wheat-fields; we sow not, neither do we reap; yet Lydia and Phrygia send us purples, and Asia ships all her produce for our use." Such was the destiny designed by Apollo for his servants. When the son of Zeus, thus runs the hymn^c, had brought his chosen ministers from beyond the sea, he led them towards the shrine he loved, to the sweet notes of his lyre. As the train wound round Parnassus the heavenly player halted, and shewed them their future home upon the hill. But at the sight their hearts fell, and their soul was vexed within them. "Behold," they cried, "thou hast brought us to a far country, and wherewith shall we get us food, for the place is steep, and good neither for the fruit-tree nor for the flock?" Then a smile broke upon the lips of their divine guide: "O dead of faith," he cried, "ye know not what ye ask. Such as ye seek were but a weary life; I will give unto you an easier mission. All ye need do is, knife in hand, freely to slay the victims men will bring you from the ends of the earth."

So ring the echoes of Homeric minstrelsy, as many an old ballad since has sung of the happy life of monk or friar. That even sheep might feed in the consecrated lawns is commonly denied. Those requisite for the altar in early days may well be supposed to have accompanied the pilgrim from his home^d, though the inconvenience of the custom would be likely to prevent its duration. When we consider the emolument to be derived from the simpler method, we cannot esteem it impossible that the meadows might be filled with flocks and herds destined for the sacrificial blade. Thus the vendors of victims in the time of our Lord had made their way into the Jewish sanctuary, and the pecuniary profit seems to have atoned for the sacrilege. Nor can it be thought inappropriate that the shepherd god from Amphrysus^e should gather his sheep around his temple; the many servants^f of his house might well be employed in tending them, a labour which would be sanctified by recollections of the history of their master. But one thing at all events is clear, no grazier leased the land, or desecrated with private enterprise the hallowed sheep-walks of the god.

^b Lucian. Phalaris.

^c Homer. Hymn. Delph.

^d Γρινὸς βασιλεύων Θήρης τῆς νήσου, ἀπῆκετο ἐς Δελφοὺς ἔγων ἀπὸ τῆς πόλιος ἐκατόμβην. Hdt. iv. 150. Cf. ἔγειν ἱερὴν ἐκατόμβην. Hom.

^e "Pastor ab Amphryso." Virgil. G. iii. 2.

^f The λαὸς οἰκῆτωρ θεοῦ, as they are called in the Tragedians.

The people of the neighbourhood suffered in moral character for the peculiar prejudices of their rulers. They degenerated into a vagabond and lazy race; nothing else could be expected as the consequence of a system which banished industry and promoted idleness. Husbandry was impossible, and an easy and by no means precarious livelihood was offered them at their very doors. Even in the days of Æsop their worthlessness was notorious, and that righteous preacher paid the forfeit of his life for his denunciation of their iniquities. With all its profusion of charity, the temple was unpopular. The monasteries of England established a hold on the affections of those around, for the old monks were indulgent landlords, received their rents in kind, and spent their substance more or less in ameliorating the condition of their tenantry. But the fraternity of Delphi were of different blood and sympathies from the people of the land. It is questionable whether their rule commended itself to the citizens of their own town. The villages near most assuredly detested them. The evil were naturally covetous of so much wealth and influence which they saw almost within their grasp; the well-disposed could look with no favour upon an institution so ruinous to independence and activity. Those who lived close at hand had many opportunities of seeing the weaknesses and vices of the reverent hierarchy. Prophets are seldom prophets in their own country. At the very time when Greece outside the borders of Phocis looked upon the Oracle as infallible, its neighbours had learnt to disbelieve in all but its fallibility. Crissa, in a remote age, on the occasion of a quarrel did not hesitate to sustain her rights by the sword. The Phocians more than once in Greek history have raised the standard of rebellion; and even Amphissa has marched upon the holy city. It is thus, too, that Rome has found less faith in Italy than in the rest of Europe, and foreign armies have been obliged ere now to defend the infallible Church against her insubordinate subjects.

Meanwhile the temple grew in riches and in power. Its well-filled treasury became a simile for poets^h, and a resource to which friendly statesⁱ could apply for loans. Contributions of every description poured in from the pious throughout Greece. Hither came from beyond the very seas^k crowds of lay^l brothers to do duty in the offices of the

^g They inflict a fine on their own town. Hdt. ii.

^h Cf. οὐδ' ὅσα λάϊνος οὐδὲς, κ.τ.λ. Hom.

ⁱ ἐξαργυρούμεθα ἀπὸ τῶν ἐν Δελφοῖς χρημάτων δάνεισμα γὰρ ποιησάμενοι, κ.τ.λ. Thucyd. ii. 21.

^k Eur. Phœn. Τύριον οἶμα λιπυῶσ' ἔβαν.

^l ἱερόδουλοι.

holy place. Some had gone up in their childhood^m (as the Jewish children went up to Jerusalem) to be put into the service of Apollo, a service which we are not surprised to find they were loath to leaveⁿ. Others were bastards who had betaken themselves to the Pythia as to their only earthly mother^o. Many of the fairest^p youths and maidens of their native town had been sent as a gift to the deity, who claimed the first-fruits of all things. And there were some too, the captives of the bow and the spear, who had been dedicated to his house by their newly-made masters, or sold as slaves^q to the god for a consideration. It was a strange scene around the precincts of the Oracle. Multitudes of well-fed beggars thronging the hill-side avenue, dependent for subsistence upon the altar^r and the bounty of the chance stranger; troops of birds^s hanging all day above the ledge of Parnassus, waiting for the hour of sacrifice to arrive; swans^t from the river fluttering round the incense piles, reared it may be by the priests, as the brethren^u of Syria fed tame fish in their ponds; dry^x smoke wreathing upwards through the roof of the sanctuary from the fragrant myrrh which burnt within. Here some poor felon^y claimed the protection of the divinity of the place; there came lords and ladies on solemn pilgrimage; husbands without their wives to confide their family sorrows to Phœbus^z; wives without their husbands to entrust him with some dark secret of their previous lives. Princely trains from Europe and from Asia rode together in the bright sun up the ascent. The Athenian^a burgher about to pray for heirs of his body, in company with the Spartan who bore some state message from his kings. Embassies from every city, with costly presents to the shrine; aged priestesses who had grown gray within the valley, travellers^b and worshippers, cicerones^c and

^m Ion, 316. παῖς δ' οὖν ἀφίκου ναὺν ἡ νεανίας;

ⁿ Ion, 639.

^o χαῖρ', ὦ φίλη μοι μήτηρ, οὐ τεκοῦσα περ.—Ion, 110, 321, 1324.

^p Cf. Plutarch. ἀπαρχαὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων. Eur. Phœn. 204.

πόλεος ἐκπροκριθεῖσ' ἐμῆς
καλλιστεύματα Λοξία.

^q Creusa asks Ion: ἀνάθημα πόλεως ἢ τινος πραθεῖς ὕπο;

^r βωμοί μ' ἔφερβον οὐπιὼν τ' αἶλ' ἔξενος.—Ion, 323.

^s Ion, 159.

^t Ion, 161.

^u Cf. Lucian, Syr. Div.

^x Ion, 89.

^y Ion, 1284.

^z σὺν ἀνδρὶ δ' ἤκεις ἡ μόνῃ χρηστῆρ' ἰα;
ἦλθον δεῦρο πρὶν πόσιν μολεῖν
μάντευμα κρυπτὸν δεομένη Φοῖβον μαθεῖν.—Ion, 300, 331.

^a ἄτεκνος ἐστὶ καὶ Κρέουσ' ὃν οὐνεκα
ἤκουσι πρὸς μαντεῖ· Ἀπόλλωνος τάδε.—Ion, 65.

^b Ion, 231.

^c περιηγηταί, common at most temples; possibly priests, as the frequent information Herodotus got from priests seems to shew.

pedlar-merchants^d, consuls^e and innkeepers^f, bleating sheep and lowing oxen, all together presented a picture to be seen perhaps nowhere else in Greece.

But it was not so much the motley groups and the brilliant gathering that arrested the fancy of the Greek who journeyed thither to worship. What thoughts had been his already as he drew nigh along the deep defile of the Pleistus! How his imagination had been fired by the historic recollections that hallowed every spot! The Englishman whose creed is unimpassioned, and whose religion comes to him from a far country, can form no just conception of the effect of traversing soil every inch of which is alive with divine memories. Each moment the pilgrim trod in the footsteps of gods and heroes. Here Laius^g had driven, there Œdipus had stood. The statues that had charmed the eye, the hymns that had riveted the ear from childhood, the tragedies that had so often won his tears, all drew their inspiration hence. The sentiments of a lifetime came crowding upon him. He now felt all that poet had ever sung or sculptor graven. He seemed to rise from a dream and to wake amid the past.

It was not until he emerged from the pass that the traveller came in sight of the town and sanctuary of Delphi with its gold-spangled^h roofs and its columned courts. Here, deserting the course of the stream, he turned to follow the road which led up the cliffs towards the temple. Above him was the sun-smitten shoulder of Parnassus; below his feet, upon the left, he saw the wood through which the waters of Castalia fell. Between them and him rose antique edifices, some in ruins, others in preservation, each the property of some divinity or demigod. A little higher up was the chapel of Minerva Pronæaⁱ, our Lady of the Outer Porch, still on the left^k; around it, strewn masses of rock and stone witnessed to the stories of the Persian raid. Hither and no further the sacrilegious host had penetrated. The chronicle relates how, when they were marching past the enclosure of the goddess, on a sudden the doors of heaven were opened, and fire fell upon the unbelievers; from the mountain above them huge crags toppled over, and came thundering down in

^d Fairs were common at temples. Cf. Grote, vol. iii. "Negotiatores apud fanum Feroniæ *mercaturæ* frequente comprehensos querebatur Tullus."—Liv., i. 30.

^e οὐ νῦν μὲν εἶσω προξένων μέγας πόδα.—Ion, 1039.

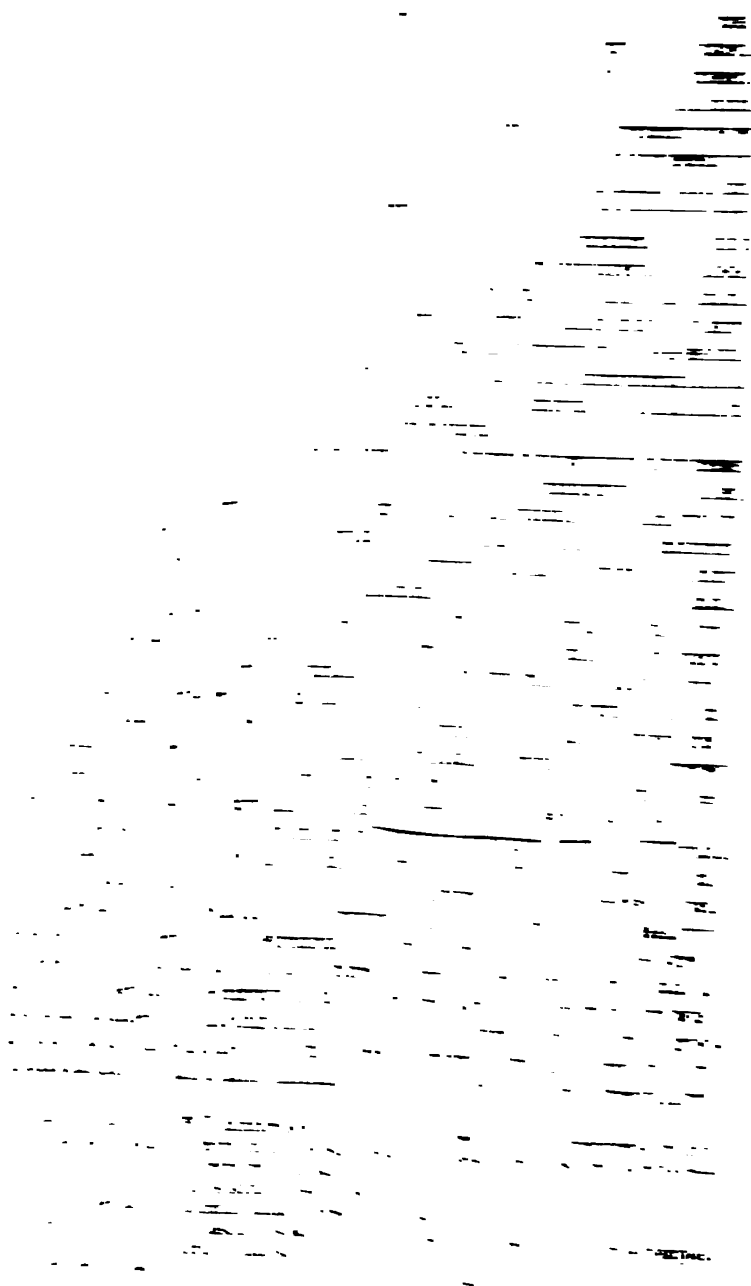
^f After Platæa is dismantled, the Thebans build an inn, *καταγωγεῖον*, near the temple of Juno.—Th. iii. 68.

^g This road being the *σχιστὴ ὁδὸς* mentioned in Œdip. Tyr.

^h Ion, 158.

ⁱ Παλλὰς Προναία, or Προνάα, an old deity of the spot. Παλλὰς Προναία δ' ἐν λόγοις πρεσβεύεται.—Æschyl. Eum. 21.

^k Hdt. viii. 39.



saw the Stygian well, and near thereto the gates wherein dwelt Gaia, mother of gods and men. Fronting them rose the high altar, crowned^t, like the rest, with laurel, on which all^u must lay tribute who would enquire aught of Phœbus. Here the priest took of their offering and burnt it upon the slab. If the day were one^v of consultation, lots^x then were drawn for precedence, and he whom fortune favoured moved on, past the Omphalos, where Apollo had reposed in early days, past the tomb^y of Neoptolemus, past the image of Pallas, to the steps of the shrine itself. At the foot he left his train^z of servants, and mounted all alone, wondering at the marvels round,—the open colonnades, the wondrous^a sculptures filling the pediments of the noble tympana, each^a commemorating the life and labours of a god. His soul burned within him as he saw the battle of the dragon and the son of Zeus: he shuddered at the Gorgon shield of Minerva, the giants flung from heaven, the slaughtered hydra. And now the jubilant trumpets^b of the priests pealed out, with notes that rang round the valley, and up among the windings^c of the Hyampeian cliff. Awed into silence by the sound, he crossed the garlanded^d threshold; he sprinkled on his head the holy water from the fons^e of gold, and entered the outer court. New statues, fresh fons^f, craters and goblets, the gift of many an eastern king, met his eye; walls emblazoned with dark sayings^g rose about him as he crossed towards the inner adytum. Then the music grew more loud; the interest deepened; his heart beat faster. With a sound as of many thunders, that penetrated to the crowd without, the subterranean door rolled back; the earth trembled; the laurels nodded; smoke and vapour broke commingled forth; and, railed below within a hollow of the rock, perchance he caught one glimpse of the marble effigies of Zeus and the dread Sisters, one gleam of sacred arms^h; for one moment saw a steaming chasm, a shaking tripod,—above all, a Figure with fever on her cheek and foam upon her lips, who, fixing a wild eye upon space, tossed her arms aloft in the agony of her soul, and, with a shriek that never left his ear for days, chaunted high and quick the dark utterances of the will of Heaven.

Such is a fragmentary sketch of Delphi considered *locally* in its relation to the *neighbourhood* and to its own *cere-monial*. That ceremonial, though imposing, was yet simple. The senses were overpowered by no illegitimate device of man's invention. We find here no torchlight mysteries, as

^t Ion, 104.

^v Androm. 1244.

^b The object being to drown all words of ill omen.

^g Famous for its echoes.

^z Here was the mystic EI. Plut. Reiske, vol. vii. p. 514.

^u Ion, 226.

^x Ion, 422. 510.

^d Ion, 104.

^e Περὶ θάρψης.

^x Ion, 420.

^a Ion, 190, &c.

^f Herodotus.

^h Hdt. viii. 39.

at Eleusis; no hallowed statues, as at Thebes; no speaking oaks, as at Dodona. The strength of the system lay in its own sublimity. Whence came that inward force which fitted it to be the faith of a great nation? What was the power it exercised upon the morality and the politics of Greece? Such is the next question for investigation. Those who wish to study the secret of its position will not forget that Delphi has two sides. It is the *seat of the god's oracle*, it is equally the *centre of his religion*. Accordingly, difficult as it is to ascertain the character of the dark superstitions which preceded the worship of Apollo, a rough outline of them is indispensable for our purpose. Apollo is the Destroyer and the Conqueror,—what was it that he conquered and destroyed?

One great feature of early Pelasgic religion is the indistinctness with which it conceives of the form of man. Nor is the remark applicable to Greece alone; it is equally true of all countries which, before the advance of civilization, have been strongly moved by the impressions of climate, scenery, or vegetation. The half-human wolf of Thrace, of Germany, of Scandinavia; the Picus and Faunus of ancient Latium; the woodpecker and serpent of America, all are examples of this confusion of idea so horrible to modern thought. We are reminded of that wild fear of animals which men in primitive times experience,—and which is partly a feeling of the mystery of life shut up within them, partly a shrinking from fierce passion unaccompanied by law or reason. The same incapacity of thought follows the barbarian into his relations with all the material world. He has but little reason to comprehend the true dignity of humanity; he cannot separate in his mind the animate from the inanimate; the stock and the stone seem more terrible than his fellow men; he sees in them what he cannot grasp. Men pass away and are gone, but these abide.

And above all, let us not forget the sense of the vivid and fertilizing power of nature, which, differing in degree in different lands, touches profoundly the impressible imagination of the rude native. The greatness of nature and the littleness of man are two correlative conceptions. The savage sees hourly his inability to comprehend the spirit that lives in every tree, and stream, and mineral. He has no knowledge of the meaning of the freedom of the will. Human individuality is of little worth. A thousand lives are employed to build a pyramid or to bridge a river. Nature, calm, grand, and eternal, stands far above him: her works endure when man perishes.

In Pelasgic Greece we can trace the elements of Fetish

and of Nature worship. The two are intimately connected, for the latter finds expression in images by no means invariably borrowed from the organic structure of the human form. Here the mother of life and being is represented by the cow. Poseidon is the horse. Athene and the owl are seldom parted. And there can nowⁱ be little doubt that the myth of Artemis and her nymph Callisto is a modified remnant of some old identification of the goddess and the bear. This inadequate conception of the human form is further preserved in the legends of Philomela and Itys, the serpent at Epidaurus, the horse-head of Demeter at Phigalea, Pelops and the ivory shoulder, Helle and the speaking ram, Argo the talking ship, Minos and the Minotaur, Proteus and Ulysses, Zagreus and the Titans, Phineus and the Harpies, Prometheus and his clay, Cadmus and his dragon's teeth, Zeus and his myriad transformations, Europa and the bull, Danae and the gold, Leda and the swan. Dodona^k, which is the seat of Pelasgic Zeus, claims, in virtue of her loquacious trees and her legendary doves, to represent Pelasgic civilization generally. Pausanias relates that white stones received formerly in Greece the honour due to gods alone. It is possible these may be merely the *cippi* so common in Oriental religions, for we observe in Greece relics of a nature-cultus such as is found both in Egypt and in India. Zeus, his cornucopia and his esculent oaks, Aphrodite^l, the genial power of life, and her birds, the emblems of generation, are part of this. Delphi itself was the abode of older deities than the Dorian. The Omphalos was here before Phœbus came, and comparative science has proved that this symbol of earth-worship is similar to that of the sacred Yoni of the East. If philology is to be believed, the name itself of *Delphos*, 'the cave,' and *Delphine*, 'the serpent' who dwelt therein, suggest some connection with the same superstitions^m.

Where the individuality of man has not stamped itself as a fundamental idea upon the imagination of a people, we expect to find, if society be utterly unformed, cannibalism,—in any case human sacrifice, mutilations, and tortures. The story preserved in Plato, that he who tasted human flesh was formerly converted into a wolf, besides attesting the abhorrence felt by later times at the thought of such a horrid custom, contains a fossil history, and proves that it once existed. Procne and Pelops, Cronus and his children, are

ⁱ K. O. Müller. Prolegomena zu einer wissensch. Mythol.

^k For the connection of Dodona and Pelasgi, cf. *Zeû ἀνα, Δωδωναίη, Πελασγική*. Homer. Hdt. ii. 52.

^l Asiat. Researches, vol. iv. p. 372.

^m Ibid., vol. vi. p. 502.

not the only instances in Greek mythology which illustrate the fact. Certain evidence can be adduced to shew the constant practice of immolating human life. The children offered yearly at Tenedos to Melicertes, the man-victim slain at Pella to Peleus and Chiron, the rites of Zeus Lycæus in Arcadia, exemplify this truth^a. Zeus the Devourer, at Halus in Thessaly, is a god of the ancient race of the Minyæ, whose religion appears from the "fytte" of the descendants of Athamas^b to have been of a kindred nature. And it is worthy of remark that the legend of Medea, evidently belonging to Minyan Orchomenus^c, is full of similar horrors.

Indeed, human sacrifice goes hand in hand with the orgies of Earth and Demon cultus, and the Propitiation of the Dead. As an antiquarian fact, the three belong to the same era of civilization, and were this the occasion for it, it would not be impossible to shew their philosophical affinity. And so the serpent, which is the emblem of Earth, is the recognised companion of Hecate, and meets us upon her coins; as, for example, on those of Aspendus and Apamea^d. The snakes of the Eumenides are an offshoot of the same fancy. Rams and black sheep^e are oblations acceptable alike to Gaia and to the Manes; nor is the juxtaposition of the Temple of Tellus and the fountain of Styx at Delphi without significance. We find still everywhere the indistinct conception of form to which we have alluded, for monstrous abortions people the nether world, and Cerberus with his triple head lasts until the advent of the hero of civilization.

And here, finally, we are led to a prominent feature of Pelasgic thought, that of personal expiation^f, oblations to appease the world below^g; not the mild and peaceful ceremonial substituted by a more refined age, but the fearful blood-offerings of devil worship, so incompatible with social and moral development. Zeus, god of Propitiation^h, is a divinity of the infernal regionsⁱ. The ram, an animal which we above noticed was sacred to Earth and Hades, is the type and medium of propitiatory sacrifice^j. The skin of this animal^k is in idea linked with rites of atonement, and the legend of the Golden Fleece is also that which records the abominable tragedy of Athamas and Phryxus. Zeus

^a Ζεὺς Λαφύστιος.

^b K. O. Müller.

^c Cf. Müller, Dissert. Eumenides, p. 144. Odyssey, xi.

^d νεπτέρων μελίγματα.

^e Θεῶν μὲν οὐδέν, says Plutarch in his treatise *De Oraculorum defectu*, δαιμόνων δὲ φάλας ἀποτροπῆς ἕνεκα φήσαιμ' ἂν τελεῖν τὰ μελίχια καὶ παραμύθια :

and goes on to connect therewith τὰς πάλαι ποιούμενας ἀνθρωποθυσίας.

^f Reiske, vol. vii. p. 643.

^g Cf. Müller, Orchomenos und die Minyer. Διὸς κώδιον.

^h Herodotus.

ⁱ Eckh. coins, iii. 9, 129, 132.

^j Ἰλασμός.

^k Ζεὺς μελίχιος.

the Devourer and Zeus the god of Propitiation, Zeus Laphystius and Zeus Meilichius, are one and the same.

But it was not the destiny of the Greek, who in the fulness of time was to develop the notions of art and of man's personality, to continue for ever in the bondage of these superstitions. Such might be the lot of Egypt, whose population, degraded and unartistic, in a land of astounding fertility, could not rise from a slavish awe of the vastness of nature to a higher view of human individuality and freedom. Yet even there, if historians be not deceived, some faint struggle for emancipation took place, some battle was fought between the powers of light and of darkness. Orus^a, the *Apollo of the Nile*, the latest of the gods, slew Typhon^b, as the Dorian god slew the Pelasgic dragon, and reigned awhile at Thebes. But this triumph produced no permanent effect upon the character of a nation to whom enlightenment was uncongenial, and the annalist of the Roman empire still found them the same sensual and brutish race that they had been for ages.

The establishment of Apollo at Delphi rescued Greece from a fate so melancholy. When the world seems plunged in depravity, Providence sends some nomad horde from a far country. They bring their own belief with them. They enter in and take possession of the land. In process of years a nobler religion drives out the old, and rules till in turn ejected to make room for a more excellent. The new system was well adapted for the work it had to do. The Pythian god is the representation of *Anthropomorphism*. He is the type of human dignity, the glorious incarnation of might and beauty, the veritable man. It is not given to the barbarian to know him. He is no Pelasgian deity. You will not find him among half-caste nations—in Caria, in Ætolia, in Phrygia—no, nor in Italy, nor Rome. He is the symbol of no natural power; he has no mysteries, like Demeter or the divinities of the East: not nature triumphant over man, but man triumphant over nature, free, self-reverenced, great,—this is what he signifies. For those who enter his temple his handwriting is on the walls, saying to each, *Εἴ, 'Thou art;'* thou hast a separate existence, an individuality: *Γνωθι σεαυτόν, 'Know thyself,'* thine own strength, thine own will. It is Apollo's image the sculptor chooses for the purest conceptions of manliness and vigour; and when the dawn of Christianity scattered before it the ghosts of the Pagan superstitions, his worship was the last that fled, for it was that which most resembled the revelation of our Lord.

^a Hdt. ii.

^b So in Plut., Is. and Osir., Typhon is opposed to the gods of civilization.

Accordingly it is one of his truest titles that he is father of Art and Song^c. He is the god who chastens fancy, who with his sweet lyre puts to flight Marsyas and the wild flute-music. The imagination of the Egyptian and Indian is not defective; on the contrary, it is unbridled^d. But before civilization becomes possible, imagination requires a cathartic, a softening force, a restraining barrier. What is this power that moulds and fashions it, giving it the commandment, Thus far shalt thou go, and no further? Poetry it is, well named the parent of all anthropomorphic ideas^e, which transforms the fanciful nature-cultus of the Pelasgian and Oriental into the staid and sober mythology of the Greek. Then Art is born, then Humanity is raised to honour, and men learn to revere the hero, the ideal of themselves.

And if at his footfall fly the old misconceptions of the value of the human form, the old awe of the inanimate, with them we shall expect to disappear all cognate ideas of atonement by human blood, and the devilries of human sacrifice. Such, indeed, is more or less the case. This characteristic of the Delphian Apollo is expressed in his attribute of Cleanser of those that call on him^f. The notion of propitiation^g, with the growth of enlightenment, passes into that of purification^h. In every part of Greece the latter constitutes an integral portion of the new worship. To the Eupatridæⁱ in Athens, who are peculiarly connected with Phœbus, is given the privilege of administering the consolations which emanate from him. Delphi is the fountain of this soul-cleansing power. Hither Orestes must journey to be purged from his blood-guiltiness; and so completely is the Pythian sanctuary identified with this milder code, that the Athenian judgment-court^k, which tries cases of homicide, having regard to the extenuating circumstances of each, is called the Delphinium. The social advantages of the change are too obvious to require comment. In accepting it, the morality of Greece made an important stride. Not only henceforth is the Greek freed from his former exaggerated terror of the world of spirits, he has further received a precious gift in this novel conception of spiritual comfort. The thought how he may appease the angry gods below has been succeeded by a higher solicitude,—how shall he ap-

^c Μουσηγέτης.

^d It is boundless and extravagant, for it is stimulated by the natural life and fertility on every side of him.

^e Προστροφίαιος.

^f Ἰλασμός.

^g Hegel, Philosophy of History.

^h καθαρμός.

ⁱ The Eupatridæ were the first who introduced Apollo-worship into Athens. Cf. the title of the ministers of expiation,—ἐγγηγάι πυθόχρηστοι, Müller, Dor., iii. 1, 9.

^k Müller (K. O.) Eumenides.

peace his own mind? how shall he wash and be clean? To this necessity for purification Apollo himself submits. Not till he has done so does he earn his concomitant name of Phœbus¹, ever bright and spotless. The Greek mind has gained a new idea, that of holiness; a new enjoyment, religious consolation. Now may the saying of the philosopher be deemed true^m, that men put on a better self when they seek the house of the god. The text, "Know thyself," acquires fresh significance when we read that he whose shrine it adorns is a deity that searches the heart. Purity from this time forth has a right to be symbolized in all that relates to him. No unclean thing may touch the island of his birthⁿ. The prophetess destined for his service is brought up in vestal seclusion, that she may be presented to him a virgin pure in heart; victims, whole, innocent, and undefiled, are to be offered on his altar^o.

We may be told that human sacrifice was not yet abolished, that it is found, though rarely, in union even with the name of Delphi^p. The fact cannot be denied. Deducting every case where it appears as punishment for unchasteness or infidelity in the priestess, deducting further such as rest on slender evidence, as that of the oblation demanded by the Pythia in the first Messenian war, sufficient still remain to authorize the charge. But they are exceptions to the rule, and the principle holds in spite of them. The general tendency of the Dorian creed was to extirpate such customs from the daily life of Greece. Phœbus, says the writer we have above quoted^q, is mild, and a lover of mankind. Yet the myth of his victory at Delphi gives us no reason to suppose that his success was immediate or absolute. A strange religion never at once eradicates its predecessor. It leaves much, something it incorporates with itself. Helios, god of Light, feeds his cattle by the side of Aidoneus, king of Darkness. Some temporary compromise between the Doric and Pelasgic faith probably took place. So much we seem to learn from the teaching of the ancient legends. The deity who kills the serpent, himself is sorely tried, and does

¹ Plutarch. Reiske, vol. vii. p. 659:—ἀγνὸν γενόμενον καὶ φοῖβον ἀληθῶς. K. O. Müller translates it: hell rein.

^m Pythagoras. The quotation is taken from Plutarch. Reiske, vol. vii. 627:—βελτίστους γίγνεσθαι ἐαυτῶν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ὅταν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν βαδίζωσιν.

ⁿ Plutarch. Reiske, vol. vii. p. 596:—πάρθενος ὡς ἀληθῶς τὴν ψυχὴν τῷ θεῷ σῦνεστιν.

^o Δεῖ τὸ θύσιμον τῷ τε σώματι καὶ τῇ ψυχῇ καθαρὸν εἶναι καὶ ἀσινὲς καὶ ἀδιόφθορον. Plutarch. Reiske, vol. vii. p. 117.

^p As, for example, the *φαρμακοὶ* in the Athenian Thargelia. Yet these are only found in times of extraordinary pressure,—πόλεως νοσοῦσης.

^q Plutarch. Reiske, vol. vii. p. 581:—ὡς καρπῶν δοτῆρα καὶ γενέσιον καὶ πατρῶον καὶ φιλόδηρον.

homage to Admetus^{*}, the invincible prince of the Shades. What more antagonistic than the rites of Apollo and the rites celebrated to the dead? Yet at Triopium[†], Ceres, the infernal gods, the Manes and Apollo, are all worshipped together.

The spirit of the divinity at Delphi is, then, the spirit which ushers in a new life, of law, of art, of enlightenment. In the grave and orderly[‡] Dorians we recognise the children of Apollo. We must not confuse with the Dorian, properly so called, the incidental peculiarities of his race, which were developed afterwards, and may be attributed to his difficult position as feudal lord in a territory only held by force. Once the Dorian was active, enterprising, energetic; he peopled Sicily, the shores of the Euxine, the south of Asia Minor. The Pythian god is accordingly, *par excellence*, Archegetes or leader. Nor does this epithet signify merely that under his auspices all colonies were planted; it has a wider application, it denotes him who is the City-builder. Civilization to the Greek implied centralization, — city, not village life. This is the reformation which Theseus[§] the reformer introduces into Attica. The Ætolians, for instance, who unite in themselves two great features of barbarism, an absence of defensive armour and an uncouthness of language, further combine with these a third, they dwell in unwalled hamlets. Acarnania, in Thucydides, falls under the same category. When we read, in that author, how the Pelasgians^{||} of Acte have no great town, but in this respect approximate to the barbarian type, and consider at the same time that Phœbus represents the anti-Pelasgic element, we can be at no loss for a meaning to attach to his title of Ekistes. Under this appellation the student of mythology will recognise the workman who built Megara, and raised the walls of Troy.

Too much stress must not be laid upon another attribute of the god, though it would be easy by so doing to illustrate the influence of Delphi. It is the opinion of most philologists, that Apollo Nomius is not the Pythian, but an Arcadian deity. In receiving the Doric religion, that land of shepherds might naturally bestow upon their new protector a name expressive of the functions he was to discharge for them; the appellation, once given, would not long be confined within the limits of Arcadia; and as there was doubtless an archaic god of the country, Zeus Nomius, as well

^{*} Such is the rationalistic explanation given of Ἀδμήτος in K. O. Müller's Prolegomena zu einer wissenschaftl. Myth.

[†] K. O. Müller, Dorians.

[‡] Ritter, Hist. Gr. Phil., says that the word κόσμος expresses the ruling principle of Doric life, in music, philosophy, and politics.

[§] Thuc. ii.

^{||} Thuc. viii. 109.

as a Zeus Lycæus, Phœbus Apollo, who succeeded to the honours, might possibly succeed to the titles of both.

There is, however, considerable evidence to shew that Apollo is closely connected with both corn-land and pasture-land. Waiving those passages (and they are numerous) which speak of Helios in juxtaposition with herds, for it is uncertain⁷ whether Helios is not a conception foreign to the present subject, we learn from Homer's⁸ Hymn to Hermes, that in his time *the deity of Delphi* is the guardian of the kine of Zeus,—just as in the *Iliad*⁹ he watches Laomedon's cattle in the glades of Ida. Hence his relation to Aristæus, who in virtue of sonship assumes his father's name¹⁰ of Nomius, and is worshipped under it in both Arcadia and Thesaly. Hence the propriety of the tale which relates how Apollo kept the flocks of Admetus; hence in later times he ranks¹¹ with Pales as a peculiar patron of rural life. On the other hand, by reason of his peaceable and civilizing influence, he is equally god of the harvest¹². From the far coast of Asia Minor, Doric colonies celebrate their Delphic origin, by embassies that bear with them the tribute of the golden¹³ summer. Metapontum, which is one, has a corn-ear¹⁴ stamped upon her coins. Not only to Delphi, but to her sister shrine at Delos, the first-fruits are due. Thither come the sheaf-bearers¹⁵ from the ends of the earth, from the fabled region of unbroken repose and everlasting harvests.

And with this, if it be not too fanciful, let us connect that name in which the deity delights, of Agniæus¹⁶, the lord of roadways and of social intercourse¹⁷. Before the god of the wheatsheaf comes, the land is covered with the briar and the thicket, is a tangled wilderness of wood. Where his foot treads, the axe is heard, the straggling trees come crashing down, paths are bared, the waggons roll¹⁸, men come and go, and corn-fields rise upon the site of the old forest. The poet sings how, when Phœbus left the Delian lake, and travelled

⁷ Many philologists refuse to identify Helios with Apollo.

⁸ Hom. Herm. 176. εἰμι γὰρ ἐς Πυθῶνα.

⁹ Cf. Il. xxi. 488.

¹⁰ Pind. Pyth. ix. 64. νόμιον, δόδορα μήλων. Smith's Dict. Biogr. Aristæus.

¹¹ Virg. Georg. iii. ¹² Plut. Reiske, vol. vii. p. 581.

¹³ χρυσῶν θέρος.

¹⁴ K. O. Müller, Dorians. Also Eckhel, vol. ii. Metapontum.

¹⁵ Hdt. iv. 33. The περφερέες: also called ἀμαλλοφόροι.

¹⁶ An old title of the Delphian god. Cf. ἀγνιάτιδες θεραπεῖαι. Eur. Ion. 186.

¹⁷ This idea is suggested and justified by two passages:—

1. Homer. Hymn. Apollo, 226:—

οὐ γὰρ πῶ τις ἔπαιε βροτῶν ἱερῇ ἐνὶ Θήβῃ
οὐδ' ἄρα πω τότε γ' ἦσαν ἀταρπιτοὶ οὐδὲ κέλευθοι
Θήβης ἀμ πεδῖον πυρφόρον, ἀλλ' ἔχεν δλην.

2. Æschyl. Eumen. 12:—

πέμπουσι δ' αὐτὸν καὶ σεβίζουσιν μέγα
κελευθοποιοὶ παῖδες Ἥφαιστου, χθόνα
ἀνήμερον τιθέντες ἡμερωμένην.

¹⁸ Paths, waggons, cf. ἀμαξιτός, ἀμαξα.

to his home under Parnassus, "the path-clearing children of Hephæstus did him honour, and escorted him upon his journey. They it is who make smooth the rugged places, and turn the rude earth into a garden." The strong arm that makes the road belongs to the pioneer of civilization.

The Oracle was the centre of this bright and genial influence, the mouthpiece of the Spirit whose mission was to civilize. It is by no means clear that its voice was from time immemorial employed to foretell the future. The seer is not necessarily at the same time the soothsayer¹. Prophecy was once something more than prediction. At first the inspired preaching of the will of heaven, by an imperceptible transition it passes into telling of things to come. As long as every word is guided by the dictates of a high morality, while the destiny the prophet declares is one of triumph to the good and confusion to the evil, he unites both characters. When he ceases to be more than a mere fortune-teller, he plays but half his part; he is weighed in the balance and found wanting; his authority wanes; and the oracle which renounces its claims to teach, will soon be compelled^m to renounce all pretensions to predict.

To modern minds any system of religion which depends upon the consultation of oracles appears, in a moral point of view, inadequate and defective. We are in the habit of regarding that faith as the highest which is most abstract, and we are proud of the privilege of possessing a revelation which prompts not only devotion but contemplation. It is, however, an undoubted fact, that the mass of mankind cleave to a form of worship that relieves them of the responsibility of independent judgment, and does not throw them back upon themselves. Hence the strength of the Roman Catholic Church, which, as we have occasionally hinted, in more than one respect forms a parallel to Delphi. Nor in our just condemnation of oracles, may we overlook the fact that the particular one before us stands above the rest in Greece, as being pre-eminently suggestive. 'Ο θεὸς οὔτε λέγει οὔτε ἀποκρύπτει ἀλλὰ σημαίνει",—"The god tells us nothing, and hides nothing from us, but speaks in riddles for the wise to understand. This characteristic, indeed, has impressed itself upon the language of the Dorian race. They are a people who utterⁿ thought darkly; and their divinity is like themselves. Nor was the custom which the Pythia adopted with-

¹ Cf. the connection of *αἶσα* (fate), and *αἶσα* (justice), as "Ἐκτορ ἐπεὶ με κατ' αἶσαν ἐνέικεσας οὐδ' ὑπὲρ αἶσαν. Hom. II. vi. 383. Also *for, fas, fatum*.

^m This is strangely true as regards Delphi.

ⁿ Quoted from Heraclitus. Plut., *Reiske*, vol. vii. p. 592.

^o They are inventors of riddles, *γρίφοι*. Hdt. ix. 54,—*Λακεδαιμονίων ὡς ἄλλα φρονούντων καὶ ἄλλα λεγόντων*.

out its fruit; reflection was often awakened by the ambiguity of her reply. Socrates learns from the tongue of the prophetess that he is the wisest among men. Marvelling at the saying, yet not permitted to doubt of its truth, he is led to consider within himself how *he* can be the wisest, who yet knows nothing. At last he perceives that his wisdom lies in the knowledge of his own ignorance. The train of ideas which have been stirred within him does not quickly pass away; and his subsequent life is determined by the enigma proposed to him in youth. Thus Phœbus does for the human soul that which Plato regarded as the noble result of dialectic; he stimulates inward thought, self-questioning. In the following words of a philosopher, whom we have so frequently used for purposes of illustration, do we not seem to hear the echoes of the old Academy?^p—*οὕτως ἄρα χρησμοὺς ἀμφιβόλους ἐκφέρων ὁ θεὸς αὖξει καὶ συνίστησι διαλεκτικῇ, ὡς ἀναγκαίαν τοῖς μέλλουσιν ὀρθῶς αὐτοῦ συνήσειν.*

The peculiarities of Greek feeling rendered some such thing as an oracle imperatively necessary. All nations stand in need of a divine revelation; some are more keenly conscious of the want than others. None have ever more earnestly desired light than Greece. If we examine her early literature, we shall see that this is the case. Few races have been oppressed with such an absorbing idea of destiny. Poets and philosophers alike breathe one gloomy tone. Man is the slave of inscrutable doom. Human will is buffeted about by the iron hand of an invisible agent. Democritus, Heraclitus, Æschylus, chaunt the same melancholy strain. Fate binds even Zeus upon his throne. The upright suffer wrong and beg their bread. The spirit of old writers is the spirit of the book of Job, with this exception, that the inspired text exhibits the ways of God as justified at last. As years roll by, and understanding is enlarged, the picture is indeed softened. Providence takes the place of a hard destiny. Æschylus is succeeded by Sophocles; Prometheus by Œdipus. But the view of the author of the *Antigone* is but a puzzled view, and heaven still walks in a mysterious way. The sceptical Euripides is equally a fatalist; he dethrones Zeus only to establish chance upon the throne. *Δίος βασιλεύει τὸν Δι' ἐξεληλακώς.* Meanwhile casuistical problems have arisen, moral dilemmas, duties with conflicting claims, all exaggerated a hundred-fold by uncertainty of the laws which govern human life and punish human error. Where shall men turn for advice, for a pilot through the many shoals?

^p Flutarch. Reiske, vol. vii. p. 519.

This earnest anxiety for guidance the Oracle at Delphi seeks to satisfy ; it is as the voice of God answering those who long for an answer. The void which it labours to fill is immense ; will it be adequate to the task imposed upon it ? In moral difficulties will it stand for right and justice ? In political opportunities will it employ for good its enormous powers ? Such is the question which presents itself to the student of Greek history.

Those who duly examine the evidence that is brought before them, will reply, that for a long time the Oracle is unimpeachable. They will concur in the words of the poet :—

“ Dictæ per carmina sortes
Et vitæ monstrata via est.”

Apollo is gentle, and his priestess teaches that humanity must be shewn to the captive and the slave. Apollo is pure, and the Pythia inculcates purity, not only of deed, but of intention. Delphi was entrusted with the mission of interpreting the moral government of the world, and it taught that guilt met with its requital here below. The earthquake, the pestilence, the defeat, are instruments in the hands of God, by which He punishes wickedness, cruelty, or irreligion. The received pledge must be restored, the oath must be kept. Among the many instances with which the pages of Herodotus abound, we will take one that fairly illustrates the working of the system.

“ Glaucus, the son of Epicydes, was a Spartan, conspicuous for his riches, and honoured of his fellow-countrymen for his probity. A stranger from Miletus sought him out, and inspired with confidence by his name, entrusted him with a considerable portion of his wealth. It came to pass in course of time that the Milesian died ; his sons, furnished with the requisite proofs, journeyed to Sparta, and demanded of Glaucus the deposit committed to his care. But an evil thought entered the heart of Glaucus, and he said,—‘ I remember nought of the matter ; God wot if I had taken any man’s gold I willingly would restore it. Go your ways, and come again hereafter ; I will think upon the thing, and search my memory concerning it.’ Then the men departed, sorely grieved. But Glaucus straightway set out for Delphi, and enquired of the god whether it were not best to appropriate the money, and swear he had never received it. Indignantly the Pythia replied,—‘ Swear, son of Epicydes, ’tis the interest of to-day to make oath and win thy cause, and take the booty to thyself. Swear. Man can die but once, and he who swears truly dies at last. But lo ! Oath has a son, a nameless son,—no hands hath he, nor feet ; yet he is swift as the storm, nor ever stays pursuit till he hath crushed

generation and race. I trow the seed of him who keeps his oath is happier after all.' When Glaucus heard these words, he repented, and prayed forgiveness of the Oracle. But the Pythia said that to have asked the god for leave was as wicked as to have done the deed. So he went home and sent for the men, and restored unto them all. But not for that did he escape, and you will seek in vain at Sparta for a descendant of the house of Glaucus."

Of such a nature was the teaching inculcated from the tripod in its palmy days. Strabo and Plutarch both agree in asserting the uniform integrity of the Oracle¹. The former² ascribes to its veracity the honour in which it was everywhere held. "When the priestess," remarks the latter, "has entered her cavern in the rock, and is in the presence of her god, she takes no thought of human opinion, of man's praise or blame." Nor can we look upon the ministers of the system in the light of mere ministers of imposture. Where imposture begins and enthusiasm ends, who shall decide? A state of intense excitement, from the days of Pythagoras to those of Swedenborg, is capable of producing the most remarkable mental phenomena. The votaries of most superstitions have been fully convinced of direct revelations made to them from heaven. One extraordinary scene has been transmitted to us which proves the Pythia to have been at least a thorough believer in her own mission. After discharging her sacred duties upon one occasion, she rushed forth, we are told, into the astonished crowd outside, fell speechless down, and died a few days later in a nervous delirium.

But the moral influence of Delphi was not confined to the solving of difficulties in practical life. As Rome dictated formerly the ceremonial of the Christian Church, the holy city of Delphi, equally infallible, was, as it were, the head of the ritual of Greece. From such a position it was not disturbed even in the dreams of the philosopher. For Plato's ideal commonwealth Apollo is still³ the divine lawgiver⁴. Many a chorus, many an incense offering, owed its establishment⁵ to the fiat of the god. We are told by Pausanias that the sacerdotal college were jealous in the highest degree of innovations unsanctioned by themselves; they confirmed their religious authority by taking the lead on every possible occasion. Numbers of towns built temples⁶ in close connec-

¹ Götte, Das Delphische Orakel, collects several passages proving the uprightness of the Oracle, p. 127.

² ἡ μὲν οὖν ἐπὶ τὸ πλεῖστον τιμῇ τῷ ἱερῷ τοῦτοφ διὰ τὸ χρηστήριον συνέβη δόξαντι ἀψευδεστάτῳ τῶν πάντων ὑπάρχει.

³ Plato, Republic.

⁴ Dem. Midias.

⁵ πατριος ἐξηγητής.

⁶ Paus. iii. 13. 6.

tion with, and by the express direction of, the Oracle. Some owned the same patron god, as the shrine of Apollo Diradiotes at Argos. But the Pythia was too wise to stand or fall by one single form of ceremonial; her object was to acquire influence, not by eradicating other worships, but, by incorporating them with her own, to assume of divine right a protectorate over the religion of the world. Colonies went out to establish in far lands the traditional belief of their own country, and, with a prudent toleration, Delphi gave the sanction of her name to each. The fugitive Phocæans are directed by Phœbus⁷ not to end their wanderings till they have founded a chapel to Cynos. Yet Cynos, so far from being a Doric hero, is entirely a creation of the Posidon and Demeter myths. Thus Apollo disarms dissent, by claiming to be common patron of all faith. A story is recorded that Athens, eager to ensure her orthodoxy, sent messengers to ask at his shrine what rites she had better ordain. "Worship," was the response, "according to the custom of your forefathers." "But our forefathers," expostulated the Athenians, "had many customs, which shall their children choose?" "The best," rejoined the divinity; nor could they induce him to enter further into explanation of detail.

Nor did Apollo claim only a general superintendence over national religion. Personal duties, sacrifices, and observances were frequently enjoined upon individuals by his priestess; private as well as public life acknowledged the holy authority of the tripod. Socrates is a somewhat remarkable instance of the punctilious obedience frequently paid to its commands; and if we take into consideration the various levers it could bring to bear upon opinion, we shall be less astonished at its moral weight.

For first, like the Christian Church, it had the right of *canonization*. As to the pope is given power to add a new saint to the calendar, the Chamber of the tripod could enter a new name upon the list of immortals. Nor was the prerogative sparingly exercised. We hear of it in Cyprus, in Sicily, in the Thracian Chersonese. Traces of it may be collected often enough in the pages of Herodotus. In the seventy-first Olympiad, the Astypalæans receive notice of a fresh addition to the roll of demigods, in the latest hero manufactured in their day⁸. But little thaumaturgy, few miraculous lives or magical stories, are mixed up with this custom in the history of Greece. The ends it was designed

⁷ Hdt. i. Κρίσαι Κύρνον.

⁸ ὕστατος ἥρώων Κλεομήδης Ἀστυπάλαιεὺς
 ὃν θυσίαις τιμᾶθ' ὥς μηκέτι θνητὸν εἶναι.

Cf. Smith's Biogr. Dict. Cleomedes.

to serve were moral and political, not superstitious. As far as religion was concerned, its chief result would be to confirm the popular idea of the soul's immortality. Morally speaking, it was surely no hindrance to a nation's growth that upon fit occasion it should be taught to idealize human character. The Oracle by judicious enactments only effected at once what it is the great merit of history to effect in time. Thus Greece was perpetually reminded of the affinity between the human and the divine. The lesson lost none of its social value, if it often owed its origin to political motives.

In the next place, the Oracle, to borrow again modern and suggestive language, had the right of *interdict*. A punishment of this kind was quite as serious to the Greek as to the Roman Catholic. Not indeed that it was peculiar to Delphi; all temples employed it, those obviously with the greatest success which offered the greatest attractions to the worshipper and the pilgrim. That of Zeus Olympius, at Elis, repeatedly did so for purposes of state policy; indeed, international law grew up under the shelter of this recognised institution. The severest penalty which could be inflicted upon the pirate and the truce-breaker was to banish him from the sacred festival and the hearth of the god. The most powerful states yielded in silence during its infliction. It is the resource of Elis against Sparta,—the threat which Delphi holds out to Athens, more than once carries into execution against Phocis. To private offenders it was no less terrible; they were cut off from the source of religious consolation. And as above, we are compelled to admit that this powerful weapon was used for the cause of civilization. Nor are we only sensible of the justice, we acknowledge the humanity of the sentence passed upon the slayer of Archilochus:—

“Thou hast slain the servant of the Muses,
Get thee hence from my holy shrine.”

A third engine which may have been at the disposal of the Oracle is one more familiar to us in European than in Hellenic society,—*the confessional*. Though this supposition is little authenticated by historical testimony, I cannot pass over a valuable passage in Plutarch which suggests it. Among other apophthegms, that writer tells a story respecting a certain Spartan who was called upon by a priestess to confess: and the answer which he is recorded to have made would not be unworthy the tongue of a Protestant divine.

* Μουσῶν θεράποντα κατέκτανες* ἔξισι ναοῦ.

Smith's Biograph. Dict. Archilochus.

And it is but right to observe that there is no *a priori*^b improbability of the existence of such a custom. The Pythian religion is one that establishes a high standard of morality. Whether or no the conscience of the pilgrim was unburdened in detail, *absolution*, as a part of Apollo-worship, occupies no doubtful position, half way between fact and fiction. So much is proved by the very meaning of the word *ἀφοίβατος*. In a preceding page we examined the significance of Phœbus's title of Prostrópæus; we there saw that it was applied to him in his character of Cleanser from blood-guiltiness. Were it indeed a tenable proposition that the god's interference is limited to the office of purifying the sinner for fresh intercourse with the world, it would not be so clear that absolution in the modern sense is a Delphian rite. But antiquity regarded the criminal as unfitted for intercourse with heaven; he is hateful to the gods^c; his iniquity defiles the pure image^d he embraces, and he stands in need both of social and moral healing. The most conclusive proof, however, of the use of absolution, is its subsequent abuse. We read of mendicant pardoners^e in the fourth century B.C., just as we read of hawkers of indulgences eighteen hundred years after. These impostors did not confine themselves to intercession for the sins of the living only. They sought to persuade their countrymen that power from on high was given them to atone for sins committed even in a former generation.

With these great powers entrusted to its discretion, with all the prestige that unquestioned infallibility confers, Delphi, and it is worth recording, was tolerant. Towards other forms of religion there is nothing remarkable in her being so, for polytheism is not straitened in its notions. Wherever the heathen goes, he is permitted ordinarily to accommodate himself to the faith he finds. The most scrupulous devotee of the Eleusinian mysteries might bow^f before the celebrated impersonation of Apis and preserve his orthodoxy intact. But the Pythian deity was no enemy to the progress of thought and of science. No Inquisition sat under the shadow of Parnassus. The truth is, that in early Greece metaphysics and religion did not occupy hostile camps. The Pythia is allowed to settle^g the ceremonial of the philosopher's Utopian city. Aristodeia, a Delphian

^b The wonderful knowledge of the Oracle is suggestive of systematic confession.

^c Æschyl. Eum. 40. θεομυσής.

^d Æschyl. Eum. 445.

^e ἀγύρται καὶ μάντεις ἐπὶ πλουσίων θύρας ἰόντες πείθουσιν ὡς ἐστὶ παρὰ σφίσι δόναμις ἐκ θεῶν πορίζομένη θυσίαις τε καὶ ἐπωδαῖς εἴτε τι ἀδίκημα γέγονεν αὐτῶν ἢ προγόνων ἀκείσθαι.—Plato, Rep. ii.

^f As Alexander did.

priestess, was not hindered from enrolling herself among the disciples of Pythagoras. Socrates, whose teaching, if earnest, was anything but dogmatic, reaches, in the estimation of Apollo, to the summit of human wisdom. Even the free-thinking Euripides ranks above the pious Sophocles^b. It was only in later days that scepticism and the Pythia came violently into conflict. And Epicureanism, which is incompatible with earnest creeds, fell foul of the Oracle of Apollo.

As connected with Delphi's attitude towards philosophy, let us say one word in reference to an accusation often made against that institution, that it gave little impulse to education. Whether or no its direct tendency was to raise the intellectual condition of the lowest classes, it is not possible to say. We must not forget that in ancient constitutions this would be the particular duty, not of the priesthood, but of the state^c. The sacerdotal office is a ceremonial, not an educational one. Nor are our modern notions of education at all applicable to the ancient world. Without enlarging on the question, we may briefly remark that the lord of the Muses is surely the father of *Μουσική*. He whose temple was a vast museum of art, whose spirit animated the tragedian and the sculptor, who inspired the minstrelsy of a Homer and a Pindar, must have been, in the highest sense, the educator of a nation.

Turning from the consideration of the Oracle as a moral element in Greece, we pass on to examine the part performed by it in that country's *political development*. To say generally that it was the source of justice for the states which frequented it, would be merely to affirm of Delphi what is true of most temples, European and Asiatic. The civilizing influence of the Dorian religion must have been the means, in one sense, of expanding Greek notions of right and wrong. But not the slightest ground is afforded us for supposing that before the Apollo-cultus Greece had no conception of law; antiquarian evidence is all on the other side; one consistent tale is told by every myth. Themis dwelt at Delphi before Phœbus was enthroned there. Orpheus sings how she instructed the newly-arrived god in justice and in judgment; the Pythia of Eumenides, who in her opening speech is not likely to say anything incongruous with Delphian legend, speaks to the same effect; and the line,—

“Fatidicamque Themis^d quæ tunc orâcla tenebat,”—

shews, at all events, what is the idea of later antiquity upon

^c Plato, Rep.

^b Σοφὸς Σοφοκλῆς, σοφώτερος δ' Εὐριπίδης
Ἄνδρῶν δ' ἀπάντων Σωκράτης σοφώτατος.

διαφέρει τούτῳ πολιτεία πολιτείας ἀγαθὴ φαύλης.—Ar. Eth. ii. 1. ^d Ovid.

the point. But Apollo, who succeeds Themis, does not discharge his functions in exactly the same way as his predecessor. Henceforth it was not the principle of Delphi to rule Greece, by establishing judges in that little valley for the entire land, as Israel was ruled by judges in early Jewish history; such government is fitted only for a people as yet incapable of self-culture. The spirit of the Dorian Oracle was to encourage separate national growth, independent legislation. It aided Lycurgus in Sparta, Solon in Athens, it sent Demonax¹ to Cyrene. Doubtless it would assist the formation of each statute-book by special advice, as report^m said had been the case at Sparta. Lawgivers, apart from all religious considerations, were not likely to refuse counsel from a body whose means of political information and insight into national character were infinitely greater than that of any other body in Greece. Indeed, Delphi had an actual right to interfere; its interposition was an acknowledged duty, resting, if we may adopt the term, upon a constitutional basis. In a special sense, it was the fount of government, and kings wore their crowns by divine right emanating thence. This divine right differs considerably from the modern, in virtue of which the Pope was suzerain of kings and emperors. Pepin and Charlemagne would receive their authority from Rome, because men regarded the kingdoms of this earth as belonging to God, and so mediately to His vicar. But the Vatican's temporal and spiritual claims are based upon purely spiritual ideas. The kingdom of Apollo was an earthly and a tangible one. What the Greek meant by divine right was that the clan owed temporal fealty to its head. If he chose to regard that personage as a god and not a man, the allegiance due to him would not be a whitⁿ the less real. Delphi considered itself as the political heart of an empire; in great crises the provinces rally round it, and if it betrays its trust occasionally, we do not find that it renounces its position. The Delphian sacrifice to the winds in the Persian war professes to be the ceremony of a people. The Amphictyonic council, or holy alliance, of which the Pythian god is the centre, is an organized^o national league.

Accordingly, the Oracle was legally justified in taking full part in the business of every state. An avowed policy of non-interference, so far from being appreciated by Greece, would have been inexplicable, would have been the renunciation of an historical right. The king, the prince, the legislator of each city, was the representative of the lineal

¹ Hdt. iv.

^m Ib. i. 65.

ⁿ Cf. the remarks made in a previous part of the Essay about feudal tenure.

^o Cf. the ban put upon Ephialtes. Hdt.

god. Aleuas of Thessaly stood to Delphi on a footing distinguishable from that which Henry IV. occupied to Hildebrand. A change of government, a revolution without the sanction of the god, is actual rebellion against him. Let us illustrate this point by two passages from Homer, the great text-book of constitutional theories. Omitting many which in a general^p way speak of the royal sceptre deriving to the king from heaven, we find in *Odyssey* iii. *oracular command and deposition of dynasties* placed in juxtaposition as causes and effect :—

ἦ σέ γε λαοὶ
ἐχθαίρουσ' ἀνὰ δῆμον ἐπισπόμενοι Διὸς ὀμφῇ ;

asks Nestor of Telemachus, whom he supposes to have been dethroned^q. We turn to *Odyssey* xvi., and discover the suitors in consultation whether they shall kill the heir and transfer the crown to another. They decide that such a step can only be authorized by the voice of God. At the risk of prolixity the lines must be given at length :—

ὦ φίλοι, οὐκ ἂν ἔγωγε κατακτείνειν ἐθέλοιμι
Τηλέμαχον· δεινὸν δὲ γένος βασιλῆϊον ἐστὶ
κτείνειν· ἀλλὰ πρῶτα θεῶν εἰρώμεθα βουλὰς.
εἰ μὲν κ' αἰνήσωσι Διὸς μέγαλοιο θέμιστες
αὐτὸς τε κτενέω, τοὺς τ' ἄλλους πάντας ἀνώξω·
εἰ δέ κ' ἀποτρῴπῳσι θεοὶ, παύσασθαι ἄνωγα.
ὧς ἔφατ' Ἀμφίνομος· τοῖσιν δ' ἐπιήνδανε μῦθος.

Here we clearly have the legal bearings of the whole question. Thus^r we perceive how Delphi might with propriety arbitrate between kings and their people. Such was the religious prestige of the Oracle, that this arbitration is exercised even in cases where no legitimate right could exist, as in that of Gyges^s. Athenian civilization being later than Dorian, we feel no astonishment at learning that Apollo's suzerainship, which is a fact for the rest of Greece, by a kind of fiction extends even to Athens. Cylon^t only dares to seize on the Acropolis after the supposed approval of the deity. It is scarcely necessary to observe that Delphi, which could interfere in the internal dissensions of a town, could equally^u do so when a quarrel arose between two Greek states. By

^p Hom. *Διοτρεφέες βασιλῆες*. Cf. Hesiod. Th. 96, &c.

^q The comment of the Scholiast is so suggestive as to be worth transcribing,—
πολλὰκις γὰρ, φασι, μεθίστασαν τοὺς βασιλεῖς μαντείας ἐπιγενομένης.

^r Hence the connection, so discernible in Greek history, between royalty and Delphi, as, for instance, in the case of the Spartan kings. Hdt. vi. 66. Th. v. 20; Hdt. v. 72, iv. 150. The Oracle actually interferes in the marriage of Damagetus, the Dorian prince of Ialysus. Smith, Biogr. Dict. Damagetus.

^s Hdt. i.

^t Thuc. i. 126.

^u Thuc. i.

the happy exercise of this prerogative the Oracle might fairly be esteemed the *national peacemaker of Hellas*.

That Delphi, the head-quarters of the family of Dorus^x, should exercise its influence in favour of Dorian interests, was to be expected. Few will deny that these are identified throughout Greece with the triumph of oligarchical principles. Let us look at the position of the Dorians in the territories which they occupied, and we shall see what, for them and for their patron, the Pythian Apollo, *oligarchical principles* signify.

Brasidas, in a speech to his Spartiate soldiery, uses language capable of universal application to the whole race. They^y are military occupants, he tells them, among a people of foemen^z. One characteristic of a revolution among Dorian subjects seems to be that it is effected under the leadership^a of an elected champion, who subsequently becomes a popular despot. From Sicyon^b to Corcyra^c this is always the case. Procles of Epidaurus, Theagenes of Megara, Cypselus of Corinth, have this common point. They represent the Demos, which is anti-Doric. Personally^d they are not of Doric descent, and no doubt frequently belong, like Cypselus, to old country families, as Athelstan in Ivanhoe is a Saxon of noble birth. The Dorian oligarchy would then be bitterly opposed, first, to all that was democratic; secondly, to the man of the people, or tyrant. Hence the Lacedæmonians are consistent in abolishing tyrannies. None hate despotism so thoroughly as a real aristocracy, because it is the success of an element antagonistic to themselves.

Those, then, who rule the *Oracle*, if faithful to the instincts of blood, must combine these two qualities, *antipathy to the tyrant*, and *antipathy to the mob*, both displayed in a general adhesion to the line adopted in politics by a great Dorian state like Sparta. Nor would it be a mere sympathy of race which would determine the Pythia to shape her course of action thus. Delphi in Phocis, as Lacedæmon in Peloponnese, was situated on a mine ever ready to explode. When differences arise between the Phocians and the temple, Delphi looks for assistance^e to the banks of the Eurotas; and Phocis meets with assistance^e from Athens; for the Athenians had flung themselves, heart and soul, into the ranks of the liberal party. The maritime character of their population had partly obliged them so to do; partly they were driven to it by

^x Son of Apollo.

^y Thuc. iv. 126.

^z οὐκ ἄλλω τινι κησόμενοι τὴν δυναστείαν ἢ τῷ μαχόμενοι κρατεῖν.

^a προστάτης δήμου.

^b As Cleisthenes.

^c As Pithias. Also in Syracuse, Hermocrates.

^d Of Aetion, father of Cypselus, we read, Hdt. v. 92, δήμου μὲν ἑὸν, ἀπὸρ τὰ ἀνέκαθεν Λατιῶν.

^e Thuc. i. 112.

the jealousy which oligarchies ever display to freedom in the cities near, because they knew that revolutionary ideas are contagious. Gelon, absolute monarch of Syracuse, expresses himself to the effect that Demus is a very uncomfortable neighbour to have next door: and modern history supplies a capital illustration in the suspicious air with which foreigners regard England.

The pages of Herodotus and Thucydides contain no instance of favour shewn by the Oracle to Athenians opposed to Sparta. That splendid commonwealth grew up under a cloud. Like most republics, it expanded in the cold shade of ecclesiastical disapproval, though the causes of that disapproval were political, not religious. From the days of Cleomenes to the close of the Peloponnesian war, every attempt that Sparta made against the fortunes and liberties of Athens found favour in the eyes of Delphi. Those who have perceived this most clearly have been puzzled to understand the anxiety of the Pythia for the overthrow of the Pisistratidæ; a project, the realization of which, as Herodotus well saw, was the first real step towards the subsequent glory of the country. Spartan after Spartan who approached the god at Delphi was met by the reiterated injunction,—“Athens must be free.” How is it, men have asked themselves, that the Dorian sanctuary takes such an interest in the liberation of a rival people? The question hitherto has been esteemed capable of but one solution,—men answered, popular rumour answered, The Pythia was bribed.

It is most important to the argument of this Essay that, at the peril of being deemed discursive, we should be allowed to suggest an explanation for what is otherwise most strangely inconsistent with the Pythia's general conduct. Is it certain that she was moved by pecuniary considerations to a policy so unfortunate for Dorian interests?

Referring to a law we laid down respecting “Dorian revolutions,” and which has the sanction of Plato's authority, if we desire to apply it to Greek revolutions generally, we should be inclined, *a priori*, to believe that the Pisistratid tyranny is based on popular will. And such indeed, Herodotus records, was the fact. The subsequent execration in which the name of Pisistratus, the honour in which that of Aristogeiton was held, in no way invalidates it, for the annals of the world have shewn that a despotism which, originally designed to overthrow an oligarchy, misapplies the unlimited power confided to it, is rewarded with the heartiest curses of its former supporters. But the Greek historian ex-

[†] Herodotus.

[‡] Plato, Rep. ἐκ προστατικῆς βίβης κ' οὐχ ἄλλης ἐκβλαστάνει τύραννος.

pressly tells us that at first the government was mild beyond precedent^b, and if the force of circumstances drove it to harsher measures, the principle of democracy would not the less be the principle it represented. A return to the Alcmaeonids would be an abandonment of this principle, and a return to aristocratical views. The Pythia (ever aristocratical) succeeds in bringing it about; but the exiled nobility have by this time quarrelled among themselves. Cleisthenes is an Alcmaeonid, but when recalled, is no longer a conservative. The Oracle has outwitted itself. In the struggle between his faction and that of Isagoras it shews its true colours. The now awakened Dorians crowd to the assistance of their friend. Timasitheus, a Delphian of distinguished parts, is discovered among their ranks, is taken prisoner, and dies^c, as he deserves, in prison. Defeated of their end, and thoroughly exasperated, the Dorian party veer round, prefer even Hippias to Cleisthenes, a popular despot to a renegade Alcmaeonid; but their efforts are too late, and Athens is free.

Such, I firmly believe, is a rational explanation of the tangled web of Delphian manœuvres. The Pythia's honesty remains unimpeached: she was not bribed, she was only clumsy. From first to last, in the portion of Greek history best known to the ordinary student, she is *thoroughly Dorian*. Instigating Sparta to war^k, even to unpopular war, relied upon by Sparta for pecuniary assistance^l at the beginning of the great Peloponnesian conflict, throughout that conflict debarring^m Athens from access to herself, while promising to Sparta an unwavering and emphaticⁿ ally in Apollo, she stands out in bold relief throughout the history of those days. Nor is the partiality of the Oracle to its race exhibited only in great things. Little straws shew the wind, and an otherwise insignificant anecdote is full of instruction for the curious.

Crœsus, in the zenith of his prosperity, sent many offerings to Delphi: among them were two founts for holy water, one of gold, the other of silver. As years rolled on, when the real donor was half forgotten, the Lacedæmonians claimed the distinction of having presented to the god a gift so valuable. It was then discovered that some citizen of Delphi had fraudulently graven their name upon the golden fount. Herodotus pithily adds that he did it wishing to please Lacedæmon^o.

^b εἰκοστὴν μόνον πρᾶσσόμενοι. Thuc. vi. 55.

^c ἀνὴρ ἐν Δελφοῖσι δόκιμος. Hdt. v. 72.

^k Τὰ γὰρ τοῦ θεοῦ πρεσβύτερα ἐποιεῦντο ἢ τὰ τῶν ἀνδρῶν. Ib. v. 63.

^l Thuc. ii. 21.

^m Cf. Thuc. v. 118.

ⁿ Καὶ αὐτὸς ἔφη συλλήψεσθαι καὶ παρακαλούμενος καὶ ἄκλητος. Thucydides.

^o ἴστι γὰρ καὶ τοῦτο Κροίσου· ἐπέγραψε δὲ τῶν τις Δελφῶν Λακεδαιμονίοις βουλόμενος χαρίσασθαι. Hdt. i. 51.

In the above transactions, so unfavourable is the aspect in which the Oracle presents itself, that it is a positive relief to fall back upon some political good achieved by its agency. The zeal with which Greece engaged in *colonization* is mainly owing to Delphi. No enterprise of the sort was undertaken without its permission, nor was that permission ever withheld. Long before the age of history proper commences, mythology relates a tale of emigration to Claros and Colophon, occasioned by its beneficial advice. A chain of noble towns runs around the seas of Greece, attesting the adventurous spirit of the Delphian deity. Syracuse and Chios, Tarentum and Byzantium, are indebted for their origin to Phœbus Archegetes. The genial influence of his approval was not, indeed, confined to Dorian emigrants: Ionian Croton rose beneath his auspices. By his express command the Athenian Miltiades^p set forth to the Chersonese, destined to fill the niche in history which the English Brooke of Sarawak in our generation occupies, as the civilizer and elected king of a rude tribe. Naxos, by annual tribute, testified a grateful remembrance of her immortal patron; and the long list of temples^q which are consecrated far and wide to Apollo's name are a splendid monument of what he did for Greece. The command of the god might be disobeyed of none. Many an unwilling mariner was pressed into the service of civilization. In the strange controversy between Sybaris and Croton, as to the fate of Dorieus^r, an irrefragable proof of his miserable end was thought to lie in the fact that he had stopped short upon his religious errand, and had not done what the Oracle sent him forth to do, to colonize.

But it is *Dorian enterprise* above all that the Dorian god loves to stimulate. The character of this fine people had become sadly cramped by their political position. From a class of rovers, they had degenerated into a stay-at-home^s, conservative, unexcitable race^t. They alone of all the Greeks had not drunk deeply of the spirit of restlessness^u. The longing to see lands^v beyond the wave which stirred many an Ionian to leave his home, was unknown at Lacedæmon. Great was their need of a divine voice which might kindle their flagging enthusiasm. It required all the exer-

^p Hdt. vi. 34. The order came from Delphi.

^q K. O. Müller, Dorians, notices that these are chiefly built by the sea, which fact would seem to connect Apollo and colonization.

^r Herodotus.

^s Thuc. i. 70.

^t οτι τὸ πρῶτον Λακεδαιμονίων ὀργάντων ἐμελλον πεύρασθαι. Thuc. iv. 108.

^u ἡσυχάζετε γὰρ μόνοι Ἕλληνων, ὦ Λακεδαιμόνιοι. Thuc. i. 69.

^v τῆς ἀπούσης πόθῳ θύεως καὶ θεωρίας. Thuc. vi. 24.

tions of a god to force them^y into energy. *The history of Battus* is a memorable testimony to the reluctance of the nation and the perseverance of the Oracle. That descendant of the lineage of Sparta had betaken himself to the Pythia with far other views^z than those of soliciting her protection for a projected voyage. Disregarding the purpose for which he arrived, all that the prophetess would vouchsafe to say was, that he must lead a band of emigrants to Libya. But the sluggish Dorian went home, neglected the direction, and calmly settled down into a life of inactivity. Then a sore disease smote the land: again the Pythia reminded him of her commands, and reluctantly he set sail with two ships towards the African main. Nor even then did he achieve the task: he thought he had done full enough in halting short upon a neighbouring island. No plenty blessed his crops,—once more he sought advice at Delphi, once more was ordered to resume his journey. Roused at length, he reached the chosen spot, and built a city there. For two generations *no* succour arrived from home to strengthen the little settlement: but in the third, the word of Apollo came for the last time to Thera and to Greece, exhorting them in tones of warning to fulfil their destiny, and take part in the occupation of Cyrene^a. Nor was the divinity, with all his good intentions, universally successful in inducing his favoured people to embark in colonization. Instructed to land and take possession of the small island of Phla^b, on the coast of the same continent, Sparta never seems to have obeyed, and to this day the tale of her negligence remains in the works of Herodotus, an almost solitary case of an unfulfilled oracle.

Those who compare Delphi with other Hellenic temples will not be inclined to pass over in silence a good work which it accomplished in uniting Greece. At the first glance this might be deemed an inconsistent statement with the one above made of the Dorian prejudices of the god. Not so really. Had the Pythia been nothing to Athens, not been recognised in the Grecian world as infallible and common

^y When the Dorians do colonize, they set about it in a most grave, slow, constitutional way. Theras, Hdt. iv., ἀπὸ πασῶν τῶν φυλέων. Again, c. 153, ἀδελεφὸν ἀπ' ἀδελεφῶς πέμπειν πάλω λαχόντα, as if they were being decimated for execution.

^z So much is common to both legends. Cf. Hdt. iv. Γρίνω χρωμένω περὶ ἄλλων.

Βάττ' ἐπὶ φωνὴν ἦλθες· ἔναξ δέ σε φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων
ἐς Λιβύην πέμπει μηλοτρόφον οἰκιστῆρα.

^a Ὁ δ' ἀμείβετο κ. τ. λ. . . ταῦτα λέγων οὐκ ἔπειθε οἱ ἄλλα χρεῖν. Hdt. iv. 155.

^b Ἑλλάδας πάντας ὤρησε, is the historian's language, χρήσασα ἡ Πυθίη πλεῖν συνοικήσοντας Λιβύην.

^c Hdt. iv. 179. λόγιον εἶναι κτίσαι. A prediction and injunction are one and the same.

mother of every state, she would have been a harmless foe. What made her formidable was that, receiving allegiance from *all*, she employed her power to favour *some*. Had no deputation from Attica been in the habit of frequenting the god's courts, Athenians would have smiled to hear that they were formally debarred from doing so; just as Herodotus quaintly tells us that the cities excluded from the Panionium^c did not feel bitterly their exclusion. Yet in recording instances of the Oracle's partiality, we must not overlook the benefit it was to the empire to have one established centre-point of faith. Common^d altar-places and common temples were at once the strength and the characteristic of Greek civilization. They were opposed to the dividing and centrifugal influence of separate clan-worship. Other sanctuaries, by the rigidity of their ceremonial, perpetuated unhealthy distinctions of race. Tell us a man's temple, the historian^e could say, and we will tell you whence he sprang. The nature of the rites in which he joined was heraldic evidence of his descent. Fortunate indeed it was, not only for the political but for the social life of Hellas, that she had, to counterbalance this evil, a catholic establishment at Delphi. Nor will the man think lightly of the importance of a Pan-Hellenic religion, who believes that the maintenance of caste and religious *privilegia* is incompatible with a nation's true prosperity.

Such was the effect the Oracle produced upon its countrymen. What was the hidden machinery with which it wrought it is not given us to know. Who can reconstruct the picture of a great power that worked in darkness and is gone? Could we lift the curtain of ages and steal behind the scenes, and watch the hands that moved each spring, who can tell what jesuitry in the execution, what foresight we might discover in the framing of each plan? How slight perhaps the caprice that gave the impetus to some grave movement which bears no trace of pitiful intrigue! Were ramifications of the system to be found in the senate's deliberations^f, in the merchant's enterprises, in the philosopher's discourse^h? Had it its channels of information hid beneath the stream of busy life? was it leagued

^c οὐ δ' ἐδεήθησαν δὲ οὐδαμῶς μετασχεῖν. Hdt. i. 143.

^d κοινὰ ἱδρύματα θεῶν καὶ θυσίαι.

^e Cf. οἰκίης μὲν ἦν δοκίμου, ἀτὰρ τὰ ἀνέκαθεν οὐκ ἔχω φράσαι, θύουσιν δὲ οἱ συγγενεῖς αὐτοῦ Διὶ Καρίῳ: says Herodotus speaking of Isagoras. That Mysians, Lydians, and Carians should sacrifice together at Mylasa, Herodotus thinks good proof of their relationship. Again, Cleomenes exclaims to the Argive priestess who refused to allow a Dorian to sacrifice,—οὐ Δωριεὺς εἰμι ἀλλ' Ἀχαιός. Hdt. vi.

^f As commercial Siphnus. Hdt. iii. 57.

^h As Sparta. Hdt. i. 69.

^h As Socrates.

with the king upon his throne^k, the politician in his assembly^l? Might its nuncios be seen in the large towns influencing policy^m, buying and sellingⁿ principle and trust, at the bottom of many a revolution^o, prompting many a war? Did it descend to the maintenance of hired reporters and spies^p, as the false prophets of Lucian's day? Whence did it amass its store of insight and discrimination into national and individual character? Was it simply the fame of its justice and its truthfulness, which at an age when the sailor yet feared the sea, reached to Persia, to Egypt^q, to the sick monarch of Lydia^r, to the rich prince of Phrygia^s, to the Tarquin at Rome^t, and the Pelasgian at Agylla^u? To such enquiries history is silent, and if we seek to answer them ourselves, we must desert her realm and enter that of imagination.

We have hitherto considered Delphi in the hour of its glory; the time has now come for us to examine the *causes and the progress of its decline*. The causes will be found to reside partly in the waning morality of the place, but partly too in the altered character of the nation. Such is almost the law of the decay of religious belief. The unworthiness of the worshipper and the unworthiness of the priest increase together, re-act one upon the other. Systems once honest become degraded, and peoples are no longer moral. The faith has ceased to be fitted for a pure age, the age to be deserving of a pure faith. Then a storm comes and shakes the rotten bough from off the tree. Providence sends a prophet, an enthusiast, a nomad race. They bring in their train revolution, reformation, revival; and society, new-born, again moves on to more perfect things.

But *other changes* in the national life of Greece, *besides any loss of morality*, pointed to the decay of the Oracle. In days when reflection on sacred truths was rare, prophecy was requisite to communicate religious doctrine and religious comfort. As Greek thought unfolded, it felt this want less and less. Gradually philosophy supplied the place of religion to the highest minds. Anthropomorphism, the spirit of Delphi's teaching, is but a stage on the road to better things. Independence of mind has been gaining fresh strength. The

^k As Cleomenes. Hdt. vi. 66; Pleistoanax. Th. v. 20.

^l As Themistocles. Plutarch.

^m As Timon. Hdt. vii. 141. συνεβούλευε σφι Τίμων, τῶν Δελφῶν ἀνὴρ δόκιμος
ⁿ As Cobon. Hdt. vi. 66.
 ὁμοῖα τῷ μέλιστα.

^o As Timasitheus. Hdt. v. 72.

^p Lucian. Alex. (πυθῆνες). He says of Alex. ψευδομαντῆς:—

ἦδη δέ τινες καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν ἀλλοδαπὴν ἐξέπεμπε φήμας ἐμποιήσοντας
 τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ὑπὲρ τοῦ μαντείου.

^q Hdt. ii.

^r Alyattes. Hdt. i.

^s Midas. Hdt. i.

^t Livy, i.

^u Hdt. i. 167.

consulters of an oracle now seemed less advanced than they who need no oracle as being a law unto themselves². Those who enquired and deliberated might not compare with those who knew. In addition to this, Greece had become capable of more abstract ideas. The tripod and the cave were but material and gross forms for those who in contemplation had reached to the limits of conditional thought. Mystical to common-sense minds, the Oracle was unable to satisfy the craving of those who were themselves mystics. Metaphysicians began to look upon it as well enough adapted to the masses; and if they acquiesced in its position, did so with an air of patronage. By the noblest and most enlightened Greeks oracles were no longer needed.

We have had occasion to notice further how Delphi was once suitable to Hellenic views of fate, and many difficulties about the moral government of the world. Such notions are peculiar to certain epochs. An age which saw on every side the mighty fallen, empires shaken, despots overthrown, would entertain them with more than ordinary intensity. But men had become accustomed to catastrophe, indifferent to the movements of Providence. Some substituted for their past belief a distrust of all but chance, the philosopher a belief in law³. An age which is incredulous of divine interposition is not henceforth likely to feel a strong necessity for oracular revelation.

Lastly, Delphi was once the fountain from which the statesman and the lawgiver drew the inspiration suited to the emergencies of each. Solon and Lycurgus both sat at the feet of Apollo. But commerce had spread, intercourse and travelling become more frequent; men knew more of mankind than formerly, were more subtle and practised politicians. Rhetoric had grown into an art; party rivalries had quickened intelligence; the wise could do without the advice of Delphi. Pericles and Alcibiades required no supernatural counsellor to correct their judgment⁴. He prophesies the best who guesses best, says the proverb; and Themistocles could divine the future⁵ as well as any Pythia. If men like these used the Oracle, they would use it to give authority to their purpose or prestige to their persons. Yet had there been nothing else to alter the position of the Oracle in Greece except a decrease in the necessity for employing it,

² Ar. Ethics.

³ A curious example of this may be drawn from the difference between the lights in which Herodotus and Thucydides look upon the frequent occurrence of great panics in great armies. Hdt. vii. 10. ἐπεὶ δὲ σφί δ θεὸς φοβήσας φόβον ἐμβάλην ἢ βροντῇ. Cf. Thuc. vii. 80. οὐκ οἶον φιλεῖ καὶ τοῖς στρατοπέδοις μάλιστα δὲ τοῖς μεγίστοις φόβοι καὶ δαίματα ἐγγίγνεσθαι.

⁴ Μάντις δ' ἄριστος ὅστις εἰκάζει καλῶς.

⁵ Thucydides, i.

Delphi might still have fallen, but its fall would have been more honourable and more protracted. Alas! the morality of the Pythia was deteriorated. Apollo was no longer what he was, the ideal of purity, manliness, and patriotism. He had rendered himself liable to grave accusation of treason, cowardice, and corruption. When an institution which has established itself in the hearts of a nation ceases to be great, its depravity is not felt all at once. For years and years there are sceptical eyes that perceive the thing, but the people refuse to hear aught against their faith. To account for the declension of the tripod's power the student must begin far back, even in the days when that power was unquestioned; as he proceeds he will gain some direct testimony, much accumulated reason for suspicion, and when he finds that Greece believes no more, he will feel that indeed it were marvel if she should.

Ancient writers have considered that the foundations of Delphi then first were sapped when it received enormous gratuities from Eastern kings. With every wish to believe the best, it is impossible not to see the contingent dangers of such donations as those of Cræsus. There are some points in the relation between him and the Pythia which can only be explained by a supposition derogatory to her independence. What can have induced her to endeavour to embroil the Lacedæmonians in Oriental quarrels? A policy of absolute neutrality as regarded the East was clearly Sparta's interest. Such was the line it preferred by its own unaided intelligence to adopt on two subsequent occasions. Mæandrius and Aristagoras, who pressed the contrary course, were peremptorily ordered to quit the town. Indeed, Herodotus justly considers the folly of the Athenians, who acted differently with regard to Aristagoras, as the source of the Persian war. The same author informs us that it was Delphi which directed Cræsus to apply to Lacedæmon, and that it was Delphi which by private information^b prepared that state to entertain such application. Putting both statements together, we can feel no doubt as to the part the Oracle has played. Its conduct with regard to other matters suggests to us a similar suspicion. At an early period Corinth was governed by a hard nobility, the Bacchiadæ. They were rigorously an exclusive order, allowing the members^c thereof to intermarry with none below. The Demos had, however, a representative in the person of one of its own number, Cypselus. According to all our preconceived notions, the prejudices of Apollo ought to have been on the side of the Bacchiads, against the populace and their champion. But it is not so in reality. Three

^b Hdt. i. 69.

^c Herodotus.

several responses encourage the family of Aetion to raise the standard of revolt; and relying on the assurances which he receives of success, Cypselus seizes on the throne. Here we have another political puzzle. Can no light be thrown upon the transaction?

The Cypselid family, which, by the favour of the god, is now established in power, has been notorious in ancient history for its wealth. Nor is this all: that wealth, Aristotle observes^d, was to a large extent spent in votive offerings; indeed, *Κυψελιδῶν ἀνάθημα* is a half-proverbial expression for profuse religious expenditure. As soon as we actually discover in the *Œconomics* of that philosopher how the Cypselids had taken a solemn vow, in event of their design prospering, to consecrate to heaven the entire property of their native land for one year, the chain of evidence seems more connected. Lastly, an additional coincidence comes before us in the intimate alliance observable between Periander and the temple. That tyrant, who from his extensive foreign relations and home resources might wear the name of the Grecian Cræsus, is the means of secretly^e conveying to his friend Thrasybulus a private answer of the Pythia which it is important he should know.

Stories soon began to float about the world of the corruptibility of the Sacred Chamber. They were in the habit of interfering unwisely in disputes, and no longer (it must be confessed) with the view of arbitration. Even the Lacedæmonians^f talked of the frailty of Apollo when tempted with Alcæmonid gold; gossip, perhaps, occasioned by the prominent share that famous family took in the rebuilding of the temple. The tale of Cobon and Periallas doubtless rang through Greece, nor would the banishment of the one and the deposition of the other be sufficient to restore confidence. So unjust at times were the commands of Delphi, that under pressure Athens^g did not hesitate to refuse compliance. And the theory we are about to propound, if true, conclusively shews that the Oracle had learnt not only to be dishonest, but unpatriotic.

The Hellenic race was approaching the hour of its trial. The opposite civilizations of the West and East had been gathering strength and measuring themselves for an encounter which Greekⁱ and Persian^k alike saw was inevitable.

^d Arist. *Politics*.

^e *Hdt.* i. 20.

^f *Ib.* v. 90. The Athenians are said to talk of it, *Ib.* v. 63.

^g *Ib.* vi. 66.

^h *Ib.* v. 90.

ⁱ *Ib.* iii. 138. Gillus, a Tarentine exile, sees that Persian war is dangerous, and refuses to give the Persians a pretext for interfering—*ἵνα μὴ συνταράξῃ τὴν Ἑλλάδα*.

^k Xerxes, *Hdt.* vii. 8, himself says while yet in Asia,—*οὐκ ἔχω ἐξαναχωρῆσαι οὐδετέροις δυνατόν ἄλλα ποιέειν ἢ παθεῖν προκείμενα ἄγων*.

In this crisis, what were the functions that the god of Greece should discharge? Ought he not to animate his children? to preach a hearty and unsundering crusade? and if they fell, to fall with them, unconquered to the last? Such, alas, was not the attitude of the Delphian Oracle.

There is reason to imagine that, long since, the growing might of Persia had attracted the attention of the watchful priests. Struck with the irresistible progress of its arms, they pursued a course which, if not treacherous, was feeble. Symptoms of weakness already display themselves in the discouragement they gave to Ionian resistance against Cyrus. The counsel they despatched to the brave Cnidians¹ was thoroughly temporizing. Nor could anything be more calculated to secure the overthrow of Miletus's independence than the answer which that city subsequently received from Delphi. Miletus was a town peculiarly attached to Apollo. Under the title of Didymæus^m he was, beyond other deities, the friend and patron of the spot. The Oracle must have been heartless as well as cowardly to damp a nation's struggling efforts for freedom by such a message as the following:—
“And in that hour, Miletus, thou worker of unrighteousness, thou shalt be made a banquet and a rich booty for a multitude. Then shall the bride that is within thy gates wash the feet of many a long-haired master, and other priests shall tend this holy temple.”

A prophetic shrine in which confidence is reposed labours under the grave responsibility that its predictions have a tendency to ensure their own fulfilment. The infallible god who says, “Thou wilt not win liberty,” crushes hope and action as much as if he said, “Thou shalt not.” He whose words virtually decide a contest, is morally bound to drop no expression that can dishearten the righteous cause. Of this duty Delphi, if not intentionally neglectful, was at any rate shamefully ignorant. From the day when the armada of the great king left the shores of Asia Minor, to the hour when the tide of fortune changed, no prophecy from the Pythia cheered the drooping hearts of her countrymen. Lacedæmon received a disastrous warning that her city must be sacked or her king slain. Apollo paints in the following gloomy language the irresistible advance of Xerxes^o:—
“Know, ye who dwell in the wide plain of Sparta, either your city so renowned shall be destroyed by Persian soldiery, or else the confines of your land must wail loud and long a

¹ Hdē. i. 174.

^m Ib. vi. 19.

^o καὶ τότε δὴ Μίλητε, κακῶν ἐπιμήχανε ἔργων
πολλοῖσι δείκνόν τε καὶ ἀγλαὰ δῶρα γερήσῃ
σαὶ δ' ἄλοχοι πολλοῖσι πόδας νύφουσι κομήταις
νηοῦ δ' ἡμετέρου Διδύμοις ἔλλοισι μελήσει.

^o Hdē. vii. 220.

king fallen in the fight. Nor bull nor lion may stand against the coming foe. Behold, he hath the might of God himself, nor shall he stay his hand till he have rent in sunder or prince or people."

Little did the prophetess foresee the actual result of words so saddening. The heroic leader of the Spartans caught eagerly at the alternative, and if the fight at Thermopylæ and the death of Leonidas nerved again the unstrung energies of Greece, little thanks is due for the event to Delphi. But to Athens, the true bulwark of Greece, a message came still more ominous. "Expect your doom", and steep your soul in sorrow," was the burden of the god's comfort for that gallant nation. The response appeared to them strange, incredible, impossible. Through the intervention of Timon, a Delphian, perhaps a 'nuntio,' resident in the city, they sent again, determined to besiege as suppliants the temple doors, and not to depart thence without some declaration that there were brighter days in store for Attica. Once more the Oracle uttered words of similar import, and it required the skill of a Themistocles to put an interpretation on them of a more consoling nature. All he could say amounted to this, that the epithet 'divine' applied to Salamis, was a token that the battle to be fought there would be prosperous to the Grecian cause. "It was Athens," cries Herodotus, in a noble burst of enthusiasm at their courage and devotion, "it was Athens that saved Greece. Swearing that their fatherland should be free, they stirred up every Greek to action, *they regarded not the terrifying prophecies which emanated from Delphi*^a, and, next to the gods of Hellas, to them is owing the repulse of the barbarian." With the exception of one sentence, the modern reader approves the just eulogium, but if Phœbus is to be deemed a fair representative of the gods of Hellas, these cannot be said to have had much to do with the issue of the war.

The testimony, however, to the weakness or wickedness of Delphi does not rest here. At a moment so perilous it was of the greatest consequence that Greece should be united; that every province, every colony, should join the standard of civilization. Two cases have come down to us of Hellenic states who hesitated at the sight of danger; both enquired of the Oracle how they should act; upon both the Oracle, to its disgrace, enjoined an absolute neutrality. Argos, lately distracted by revolution, had some plea for inactivity, and was previously disposed thereto. Nevertheless it went so far as to consult the Pythia. Her reply confirmed the Argives in

^p Hdt. vii. 140. ^a οὐδὲ σφέας χρηστήρια φοβερά ἐλθόντα ἐκ Δελφῶν ἔπεισε ἐκλείπειν τὴν Ἑλλάδα.—Ib. vii. 139.

their determination :—"Argos, hated of thy neighbours round, but dear to the gods that never die, sit thee still, and be upon thy guard, and hold thy lance in rest : guard, guard the head, and the head will save the body^r."

The Cretans, who of old had felt the miserable consequence of engaging in expeditions beyond the borders of their island, were notwithstanding about to join the ranks of the defenders of liberty. As a natural preliminary to such an important step, Apollo was called in. A threatening veto^s came back to them :—"Fools, have ye then forgot the past?" Nor did they dare to disobey. When the storm had blown over, so monstrous a policy did that of Argos seem, that men agreed the Argives^t had been bribed. *They* pointed to the Oracle for their justification. The candid critic will not be disinclined to allow that whatever suspicion attaches to Argos attaches also to the Oracle. By cotemporaries its good faith may not indeed be impeached; but it is curious to remark the leniency if not favour which it experienced from Xerxes and his generals. A legendary tale of supernatural intervention may suffice to explain to the credulous its immunities from the horrors of war. Mardonius^u is careful to justify upon superstitious grounds his intention to leave it unassailed. Yet surely there is something significant in the profound respect which Datis^x and Artaphernes exhibit for the name of Apollo, when we contrast with it the little toleration that foreign religions in Asia Minor and in Egypt met with at Persian hands. And the Medism of Delphi breaks out in the refusal to allow Themistocles to dedicate there the booty taken from the invader^y.

While I do not wish to conceal the conclusion to which the above facts have led my own mind, it is quite enough for my purpose to point out that the Oracle is not now the centre of national patriotism. It can no longer be to Hellas what it might have been had it acted otherwise. However, the causes of its waning authority are not simply political: Greece had begun, if not to disbelieve, at least to believe less strongly. Nations do not at once pass from credulity to incredulity. There is an intervening period during which they half avow, half disavow, their allegiance. Statesmen began to make use of prophecy as an instrument for state

^r ἐχθρὲ περικτιόνεσσι (so it ran) φίλ' ἀθανατοῖσι θεοῖσι
εἶσω τὸν πρόβόλαιον ἔχων πεφυλαγμένος ἦσο
καὶ κεφαλὴν πεφύλαξο· κήρη δὲ τὸ σῶμα σώσει. Hdt. vii. 148.

^s ἡ μὲν Πυθίη ὑπομνήσασα ταῦτα, ἔσχε βουλευμένους
τιμωρεῖν τοῖσι Ἕλλησι. Ib. vii. 169, 171.

^t Ib. vii. 150.

^u Ib. ix. 42.

^x Ib. vi. 118.

^y μή μοι Περσῆος σκ' ἄλων περικαλλέα κόσμον
νηφ' ἐγκαταθῆς. οἶκον δ' ἀπόπεμπε τάχιστα.

purposes*. Indeed, the art^a was fast losing its reputation. Some held by it, some threw it overboard. In an earlier page we contrasted the feelings of Herodotus and Thucydides on the subject. Both belong to the same epoch, the epoch when scepticism is not yet dogmatic, the epoch of half-reverence. During these times it is that Athens, who had learnt by experience to know, and from her comic writers to laugh at, the fallibility of Delphi, in the middle of the Peloponnesian war complies with its commands, restores the exiled Delians to their home, and in doing so acknowledges that Apollo is still the head of the Pan-Hellenic religion.

Meanwhile, few things so much contributed to the overthrow of the Oracle, as the growth of a class which traded in divination, and employed their prophetic powers for mercenary ends^b. Elis and Acarnania^c in particular were the homes of these professional soothsayers. They belonged to certain families, such as the Iamidæ^d, or the Tellidæ^e, who asserted hereditary claims to inspiration. Roaming over the country, they were in the habit of hiring^f themselves out to political^g parties or military expeditions. Many went from door to door^h, shriving the simple farmers and living on their gains. Some houses were more famous than the rest, and members of these reaped the richest harvest. And no doubt a large number of quacks amassed a fortune by pretending a connection with temples, or bloodⁱ relationship with seers of credit and renown. Indeed, the name of prophet was at last almost synonymous with that of impostor. The priest and the soothsayer are conventional personages that appear in the comedies of Aristophanes, just like the 'pardoner' and the 'frere' in the 'merry plays' of John Heywood. "He looks wondrous like a rogue: oh, it's a soothsaying fellow^k," cries a servant of the house in a drama, when one of these respectable gentlemen enters upon the stage. We can imagine the amusement of an Athenian audience at the caricature of the reverend brethren, whom they had seen many a day at their own gates. Custom had christened this mendicant order by the appropriate title of the 'Door-knockers'.^l Nor was the trade an unprofitable

* Plutarch observes of Themistocles,—*ὥσπερ ἐν τραγωδίᾳ μηχανὴν ὕρας σημεῖα δαιμόνια καὶ χρησμοὺς ἐπῆγεν αὐτοῖς*. Such a statement amusingly reminds us of the lines:—

*ἔχεις ἅπαντα πρὸς πολιτείας ἀ δεῖ
χρησμοὶ τε συμβάλλουσι καὶ τὸ Πυθικόν*.—Aristoph., Eq. 219.

^a μαντική.

^b Hdt. iii. 132; v. 43, 44; viii. 27, &c.

^c Ib. i. 62; vii. 221, et passim.

^d Ib. ix. 33.

^e Ib. ix. 37.

^f *ἐξελάμβανε ἐπιὼν τὴν Ἑλλάδα ἔργα*. Ib. ix. 95.

^g Ib. v. 44.

^h Plato Rep., quoted on a previous page.

ⁱ *ἐπιβατεύων τοῦ Ἐθνήλου οὐνόματος*. Hdt. ix. 95.

^k *ὥς ἀλδρων φαίνεται*—*μάντις τίς ἐστιν*. Aristoph. Pax. 1045.

^l *Θυροκόποι*. *Ἡ ψευδομαντὶς εἰμι θυροκόπος φλέων*; Æschyl. Ag. 1195.

one. Many a rich man availed himself of their intercession^m with the gods; many a poor man employed them to conductⁿ his little festival. If we are to believe the comedian, they had an especial eye for sacrificial steam^o; and when an offering was going on, made their way to the scene of action with wonderful sagacity. Plato informs us that they professed to absolve from sin; and of many, possibly, it might be said in the language of Chaucer,—

“Full swetely herde he confession,
And plesant was his absolution.
He was an esy man to give penaunce.
He was the best beggar in all his hous,
For tho’ a widdow hadde but a shoo,
Yet wold he have a farthing ere he goe.”

Indeed, it is probable that most of their oracular utterances combined with an announcement of the future an especial^p recommendation from Apollo to clothe and feed his prophets. There is a witty scene in the “Birds,” in which the sooth-sayer’s verses all end with some such command, and in which the good citizen replies with a coined oracle, directing all fortune-tellers who intrude to be well beaten. Frequently they interpolated the works of old and known diviners, as Onomacritus^q did not scruple to insert forged lines into the poems of Musæus and Orpheus. Some arrogate to themselves the name of Bacis^r, a term given by Bœotia and Arcadia to those^s inspired by the nymphs. Some, we may conjecture, transcribed, or pretended to transcribe^t predictions of the Pythia herself; others sang old^u rhythmical staves among the town and country people, containing legendary prophecies; and a considerable class devoted their attention to the flight of birds, the omens^v from which were in great request throughout the whole of Greece.

We may reasonably suppose that Delphi itself by no means countenanced these knaves; but as the wandering friars brought discredit upon Catholicism, so these begging brotherhoods were likely to occasion every kind of slander against prophetic systems. For the abuse of indulgences and pardons Rome suffered; every abuse of *μαντική* doubtless told against Delphi. Whether the semi-monastic^w atmosphere of the place was as productive of moral iniquity as that of the monastic and conventual institutions of later times, it is impossible to say. Upon the whole, the sanctuary stands immeasurably above the other temples of antiquity. Few tales

^m Plato Rep.

ⁿ Arist. Pax. 1058, &c.

^o Pax. 1050, &c.

^p Arist. Aves, 981, &c.

^q Herodotus.

^r *ὁ καὶ καὶ τὸν Βάκιν*. Arist. Pax. 1119.

^s Arist. Pax. 1071.

^t *ὅν ἐγὼ παρὰ τ’ ἀπολλῶνος ἐξεγράφειν*. Arist. Aves, 981.

^u Thuc. ii.

^v Arist. Aves, 708.

^w Eur. Ion, 150.

have been handed down of improper advantage taken by the priests of their position. The regulations of the sacred college were discreet. The Pythia was not necessarily or ordinarily in the prime of youth. In the *Ion* she is old enough to be the mother of a grown man; and at a later period a rule was made fixing some minimum of age. However, it must be recollected that evidence with regard to the state of the establishment is absolutely wanting. Probably, if immorality did exist, it did not exist in any flagrant or notorious form. But the sins of the other religious houses were innumerable; and it required more subtlety of distinction than men would take the trouble to give, to discriminate between the fraternities responsible for each delinquency. The priests of Cybele and Serapis, whose life was grossest, had nothing in common with the priests of Apollo; but, for all that, they brought contempt and hatred on the god^a. About the exact nature of these two forms of worship we have ample information. When a set of men, initiated in such miserable wickedness, were wandering at will over Greece, we can conceive that no act of impiety or lust was left unperpetrated. To respect a prophet would be as difficult an act of faith as for the neighbours to believe in the monks of Pershore, or for Johan the husband^a to repose implicit confidence in Sir Johan the priest.

Greece was not much longer inclined to tolerate the irregularities of a sacerdotal body. At the opening of the fourth century B.C., philosophy had learnt to be controversial. After the opening of the next, all the artillery of the cynic's scorn, the epicurean's levity, the peripatetic's logic, was brought to bear upon a creed that was illogical, dishonest, and, alas, ridiculous. Apollo, as the model of manly purity, had overcome the Python and the Phlegyæ—he became the patron of fraud, and he fell^b before Epicurus. There is little trace in ancient times of preaching, the great medium by which in these days religion is preserved alive. When the temples began to be deserted they had no means of recovering lost prestige. Henceforth the Pythia no longer invariably gave her replies in verse. Phœbus *μουσηγέτης* laid his laurel garland down. The difficulties now brought for solution to his shrine were no longer what they once had been,—questions of statesmanship, of speculative religion, of moral casuistry. The future winner of the race^c or the pentathlon, suc-

^a ἐνέπλησεν ἀδοξίας, says Plutarch, τὸ ἀγυρτικὸν καὶ ἀγοραῖον καὶ περὶ τὰ μητρώα καὶ σεραπεῖα βωμολόχον καὶ πλανώμενον γένος. Reiske, vol. vii. p. 608.

^b John Heywood's Merry Play between Johan the Husband, Tyb the Wife, and Sir Johan the Priest.

^c Götte, Das Delphische Orakel.

^c διαπνυθανομένων εἰ νυκῆσουσιν, εἰ γαμήσουσιν, εἰ συμφέρει πλεῖν, εἰ γεωργεῖν, εἰ ἀποδημεῖν.—Plutarch, Reiske, vol. vii. p. 517.

Plutarch—
When
the
inquiries
degenerated,
so I did the
answers
cess in matrimony, the chances of the weather, probabilities of rain, prospects of the money-market or the crops, such were the knotty points that the god of Parnassus was summoned to decide; he ceased to utter oracles, he henceforward told fortunes^d. We may well hold with Plutarch, that when the inquiries degenerated, the morality of the answers degenerated in a like ratio.

When we turn our eyes to the political status of the Pythia in the fourth century, we notice a marked alteration. She is no longer avowedly Dorian. Alas! the considerations that now influence her are not exclusively political. Delphi has been accustomed to sell its favours to the highest bidder; it has been taught to fear the powerful, and to reverence the rich. First it is Theban, then Spartan, then Macedonian. The immortal line,—

εἰς οἶκόνδ' ἄριστος ἀμύνεσθαι περὶ πατρὸς,—

was bestowed upon an enemy of Lacedæmon; nor was the hero who received it unduly impressed with the value of oracular benediction. When a prophecy, we read, was unfavourable, he laughed at it; if it suited him, he repeated it to his soldiers. Yet as long as Greece was free the Pythia and the Tripod must be for her what the Senate and Populus were for Rome, even in the years of imperial despotism,—*Nunquam obscura nomina, etiam si aliquando adumbrarentur*^e. They still could be employed for the purposes of party faction, or for a political cry. Alternately caressed and defied, the Oracle at this era of its existence exhausted all the vicissitudes of good repute and evil repute. Iphicrates, the great Athenian, did not hesitate to intercept the presents designed for the god, and to use them for himself. Lysander, in his anxiety to convert the crown of Sparta from an hereditary to an elective monarchy, thought it worth his while^f to secure the co-operation of the sacred college. His first attempt upon their honesty, the student learns, was unsuccessful, and a flash of old reverence returns for a moment to our minds. But the feeling passes into one of contempt, not unmingled with amusement, when we read of his ultimate triumph over their scruples, and the extraordinary imposture which they consented to concoct. Some years after, the memorable sacred war broke out. The Phocians flew to arms, and marched on Delphi. An infidel age by no means disdains to raise a religious war-cry. A holy league was formed, and headed by Philip of Macedon, who was glad enough to wear

^d ποικίλον οὐδὲν, οὐδ' ἀπόρρητον, οὐδὲ δεινόν, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ πράγμασι μικροῖς καὶ δημοτικοῖς ἐρωτήσεις· εἰ γαμήτειον, εἰ πλευστέον, εἰ δανειστέον.—Plutarch, Reiske, vol. vii. p. 608.

^e Tacitus, Histories.

^f Plutarch's Lives. Lysander.